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"I thought we should never see each other again," he said."

LADY MARGRAVE

BY MRS. W. K. CLIFFORD.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT ANNE," "A WILD PROXY," ETC.

5

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WICKS was in despair. He looked round the flat hopelessly. Everything had been done and everything was useless. His master was going to die. The African fever had got into his bones, and left him no strength to fight an extra illness, combined with English climate. As for the consultation to take place at seven

that evening, Wicks had no belief in it. Dr. Hamilton was an excellent man. "Few as good and none better," he said to Mrs. Dunn, the cook, "and if he gives in, why, it's all up."

"Do you think he knows?" she asked.

"Knows! yes, well enough. Why, the doctor told him plainly, and for answer he just looked up with that smile of his, that would make any one glad to die in his place if it could be done, and said, 'Well, old chap, it can't be helped.' I couldn't stand it, and came out of the room." Wicks turned

his head away and tried to steady his voice. "Every comfort as he has got—plenty of money, too, and only himself to think of."

"When will his brother get here, do you think?"

"Can't be till late to-morrow night; it's a long way from Vienna."

"I suppose he'll get all there is?"

"I expect so. Pity he went off making money in that outlandish place. What's the good of money if you kill yourself making it?"

"What will become of us, I wonder, when he is gone," Dunn said, anxiously.

"Don't know," Wicks answered contemptuously. "It's him we've got to think about. What happens to us doesn't matter a brass farthing;" and he left her to go on with the chicken broth.

Wicks went through every room before he stopped at his master's door. A pretty little flat, high up, just off St. James Street. Delightfully furnished; books everywhere; one or two pictures that Norman Byrne had picked up at Christie's or anywhere else, not caring whether the price had been big or little so that he liked them; flowers in a big copper vase, suggesting the remembrance of some fair woman who had loved them, rather than effeminacy in himself; odds and ends from various places to which he had been; awkward-looking knives and other weapons fastened up against the wall. In the drawing-room, newspapers and a pipe on a Moorish table that stood

CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF

beside a comfortable chair drawn up to the fire, suggested that he liked quiet and comfort; but the chair was empty now, and there was no book on the reading-desk screwed to its right arm. Something in the entire atmosphere of the place attested that the owner was a cultivated man, and that he did not give tea-parties to which women were invited. As a matter of fact, he had few friends of either sex, simply because he did not choose to make them. A handsome man of forty-two, lonely and silent; he had lived his life, now the end of it was coming.

Wicks entered the room softly and stood by the wide sofa on which his master lay wrapped in a dressing-gown and covered with Arab blankets. He was propped up with pillows piled one on another so that his shoulders were raised, and the picturesque head and grave face and tired eyes, that had a gleam of amusement in them still, looked well against their whiteness. He beckoned Wicks to him.

"They say I am going to die," he said in a voice that was hardly above a whisper. "Seems odd, doesn't it, Wicks?"

"Do you think it's true, sir?" Mr. Byrne nodded his head. "Then what's the good of a consultation, sir, if it's only to say they are sure of it?"

"It pleases them, I suppose. You sent the telegram to my brother?"

"Yes, sir."

"He can't arrive till late to-morrow night. Have things comfortable for him, poor old chap—he will stay till it's over, I suppose. Everything goes to him and his family, but I have taken care of you—we have been together a long time, Wicks—and Dunn. I shall get through pretty easily, I expect; it won't hurt much."

Wicks stood looking at him foolishly.

"Let me be," Mr. Byrne said, "and don't come near me with any more confounded slops; they are no good. I want to be quiet and think; a man doesn't die every day." He looked up with the smile that always made Wicks feel it would be a pleasure to cast himself into a fiery furnace if his master desired it, and turned his face away from the light.

A long silence. Mr. Byrne slept, or Wicks thought he did, as he stood by the darkened window watching the still form and listening to the low, irregular breathing. One, from the little chiming clock on the mantel-piece—half-past—two o'clock. A restless movement from the sofa. He went to his master's side.

"Come here," Mr. Byrne whispered. Wicks stooped his head. "Lady Margrave is in town."

"So I see, sir, and Sir Francis just been made a canon; it's in the papers."

"He went to Scotland two days ago to bury his sister. I don't think she can have gone; Hamilton would have said so—he has been attending to their children. She never liked funerals, Wicks—she won't come to mine," he added with a sorry smile.

Another half-hour, the clock chimed half-past two. Mr. Byrne signed to Wicks again. "I want to see her," he whispered, and each word seemed to be dragged from him. "Perhaps she would come if she knew that I was dying. It's more than twelve years since I saw her. Good God! and she has a husband and three children—it's like a curious nightmare, Wicks, I don't feel as if I could die without seeing her again."

"What's to be done, sir?" But no answer came. The sick man turned on his pillow and closed his eyes for a moment. Then he answered in the voice of one who was being tortured:

"I don't know; perhaps it is part of the programme; but to lie here dying and to know that I shall never see her face again is like walking down the passage to hell. Get out of the room, Wicks, and leave me alone."

Without a word the man departed. Mr. Byrne appeared to struggle with his thoughts and then to put them from him with a long sigh of relief. The deadening languor came back, half stupefying him: through it he felt the pain of his disease, but muffled, as one who has taken chloroform that has not wholly deadened him. The room vanished, and all things with it; and in its place there came before him a country road leading away from the river. He passed a little shop at which apples and gingerbeer were sold to the rather riotous young men and women who came down on Saturday afternoons to be taken on the river at so much an hour and imagine they were boating. He could see in the window a hand-bill printed in blue letters concerning a regatta, and farther on there was a turning with a sign-post at the corner. He passed it and went on. Some one was coming to meet him along the country road. He saw her quite plainly: she wore a blue dress and a white straw hat; there was a bunch of poppies in her waistband, and he knew she had put them there for him. She took his arm and walked beside him, and laughed and looked up at his face. In her blue eyes there was a look of happiness she did not attempt to hide—a look that no mortal man could fail to understand. They went on for half a mile, till they came to a green with a clump of trees at one corner; just beyond the trees was a little square house with a garden round it and a high gate in front. They lifted the latch and went in. The garden was neglected, the fuchsias on the side-bed trailed on the gravel walk; the standard rose-trees on the untidy little lawn were covered with blight; the summer-house on one side wanted painting, the roof wanted mending, the sunshine came in through the holes in it now; on the little slate-colored table there was a heap of pebbles. They entered the house together—he and she; it was silent, and the drawing-room, chintz-covered and shabby, was deserted. Mr. Pulford was always in town, at his chambers or his club—anywhere rather than with his daughter at home; so they had it to themselves all day long. There was the river and the garden, and the country stillness, and the winter going to town, and never a soul to say a word or to ask how the story would end. They looked at each other, a long look of happiness at being together. He told her that she was pretty, and kissed her, and she hid her face in his arms a moment and laughed shyly and for sheer joy. They sat down on the sofa and pulled the books out from the shelves behind them, and read a bit from Browning, and drew closer together and read a little more; and he wished, and knew she did, that the summer-time would never end. He had looked out into the future that day, far ahead, and imagined a home that was his and Adelaide's, a trim and comfortable place, different enough from this ramshackle one near

the river. He thought of all they would do, the good times they would have, the books they would read, and the sound of her laughter that would somehow haunt the staircase. But he said no word of all this to her; only looked at her again, and thought how pretty she was, with her brown hair and flushed cheeks, and eyes that loved him and were ashamed, but did not trouble to keep their secret. And then he looked at the head of the sofa and journeyed a little further on, and hated himself, for, though she had married Francis Margrave, a tall and staid and speechless parson, with dark hair and a white face and a benevolent smile, in some dim way he knew, though words had never told him, that she had leaned her head down on the chintz-covered sofa-head and wept the bitterest tears—tears that fell for love of him and because of his desertion. But she ought to have known that even though he had deserted her he meant to go back some day and to marry her, if he ever married any one at all. There had been no woman in the world with whom he had ever thought of spending life except Adelaide.

She had made it impossible years ago when she married her parson; but even so, his thoughts had never seriously gone to any one else. He had enjoyed life pretty well without her, had known what happiness was in many lands; he gathered that she had known it too, and he somehow grudged it her because it was not his gift. People said she was devoted to her husband—so she ought to be; nevertheless, he was sitting by her in the little chintz-covered drawing-room again. He could see the print in the volume quite plainly as he leaned over her shoulder and looked at the passionate words that neither had courage to read aloud. He put his cheek against hers; it was soft and flushed, like a peach. . . .

Some one was beside him. The little clock struck the half-hour: it must be half-past three, and he had been dreaming.

II.

"LADY MARGRAVE 's here, sir." Wicks felt his voice tremble while he said it. "She wants to know if you will see her?"

Mr. Byrne looked round as if to be sure he were awake.

"Does she know?"

"She had heard," Wicks answered in a low voice, "and came and asked if it were true, and if she might see you."

Perhaps she had been thinking of the river too. . . . Norman Byrne closed his eyes and had a long struggle with himself. Wicks went round the room, making it straight, and then stood waiting.

"You can bring her in," Mr. Byrne said slowly.

There was a little rustle of stuff, a hesitating whisper, "Norman"—the door closed, Wicks had gone, and he and she were alone. She crossed to the sofa without a word and knelt beside him. She looked worn and thin, and older than her years. The flush had gone from her face—it was pale and grave—but her eyes had kept their blueness. He looked at her hopelessly and loved her, far more than he had done that last day on the river. Her lip quivered and her eyes filled with tears, but she managed to hold them back, and waited with broken and hungry for a word from him.

"I thought we should never see each other again," he said, and looked at her black dress, and wondered vacantly if she were in mourning already. In her bosom there was a rose. "I don't think I could have got through if you hadn't come, dear." She put her face down upon his hands lying outside the Arab blanket—hands that had not lost their brownness, though they were thin and nervous like a woman's—and covered them with kisses. Then without a word she raised her eyes to his again, and they drew nearer and kissed each other.

"It is fourteen years," she said, with passionate apology, "and you were first. I can't help it—nothing in the world can kill it."

"It has all been a terrible mistake," he answered, ruefully: "but it will be over pretty soon now for one of us."

"My dear, my dear," she said in a low voice, "I cannot face it, or live in the world without you."

"I thought it was only I who cared," he said in a voice of such infinite tenderness that joy and sorrow fought in her heart as if with knives.

"You are just my life," she whispered.

"But we have not seen each other all these years."

"It has made no difference."

"You have—him."

"It makes no difference."

"And your children?"

"I know—I know—but you were first. He and they, alike, came too late; I could not tear you out of me. Nothing has made any difference. I would never have seen you again if you had been well and going to live, but now—in this last hour that we shall ever know together—let the truth be told between us."

"I thought you had forgotten me long ago."

"All these years I have done my best to tear the thought of you out of my heart, and I cannot—it is stronger than I am."

"But you have been happy?" and he put his hand on her head.

"I have been happy," she answered simply, "for I have worshiped him, and thought how wonderful it was to live in his sight and do as he desired."

"How can you love me if you worship him?"

"It is so different. He is like a being apart; he has given me everything in the world; he makes me do my best and be my best. I have been ashamed of every moment that I have lived with him if it has not made for righteousness. He has been my Christ and I have worshiped him, but you—you have been the mortal man that I have loved."

"Why did you marry him?"

"Oh, Norman," she said, gently, "you left me and my heart was broken; you know what we were to each other—and yet you left me. I don't say it to reproach you, my darling," and she covered his hands with kisses again, "but only to justify myself in your sight. You loved me and grew tired; you didn't want to marry me. I was within your reach; you did not want to bind yourself, and you went away. Don't you remember, Norman? You went away without a word and left me for months—years. I was just a girl to whom the ordinary rights and wrongs were such immensities, and I exaggerated

all that I had done for love of you. I had my choice in a way—the choice of feeling that I was a wife you had deserted or a mistress you had cast off. I chose the latter unconsciously, for though it was shame to me it was less blame to you. I thought you despised me and did not care. And all those months," she went on, with a catch in her breath, "of agony and loneliness—I thought they would kill me—I loved you so. I loved you till I could have died of it."

"I should have come back after a time."

"No," she answered, sadly, "you would never have come back, dear, or cared for me again. I might have waited all my life in shame and bitterness. It was only when you heard that I was beyond your reach that you cared. Oh, my dear, my dear," she went on, in a low voice that was hardly above a whisper, "it is only because I want you to know I was not false to you that I tell you this. I never have been for a single moment."

"How did you come to marry him?" he asked.

"He came like a Christ to me in the days when I only wanted to die, and loved me more than any one in the world—more than you ever did for a single moment, Norman. He thought me good and he made me good; being with him was like earthly salvation; it seemed to purify me—to wash me white and give me saintliness when merely human happiness had failed. It made me ecstatic with joy sometimes, but it was the joy of a religious enthusiast. Oh, don't blame me, dearest! surely you understand? I have hidden it deep down, but love of you has never for an instant gone out of my heart. I have thought it something to be alive in the same world with you. The world will go into darkness for me and life be only unutterable anguish if you go out of it."

"But you belong to him now; you can't do away with that. You are his wife and the mother of his children."

"Norman," she whispered, "it is such a strange thing, but I always feel that I am your wife. The tie between us was made first, and can never be undone. Toward him I feel like a strange woman who has been taken into his love out of infinite pity for pain of which he does not know, a worshiper whose great honor and happiness, yes, even happiness—the happiness of a woman on the steps of heaven looking toward her Saviour, while her poor human love, of which she does not dare to think, is in the world behind her—it is to live her life with him and work with him, and hear his voice and see his face, and bear his children; in my heart I often kneel to kiss his feet. Some day I shall be buried in the same grave with him, and then the story will be complete. I think I shall get up and creep from under the white stone and go to you alone in your grave"—the tears rushed to her eyes at the last word—"and put my face against the wet grass over you. Then I will go down—and down—seeking you in the darkness, and lie still and cold for just one hour beside you before I go back to that other place that is forever my home. Norman, even though I have this tremendous secret in my heart, toward you both I have been true, giving to you each the utmost that was in me. I could not do more, dear; do you understand? If I could only know that you did—"

"I love you," he said, looking into her eyes and at the ghost of the old sweet flush that had come back to her face, "and have never loved any other woman in my life. I was a fool, dear, as well as a brute, for I love you most in the world."

"Oh, if you had said it years ago! If you had said it just once—"

"And you mean that you love me still?" he asked, "though you are married to another man?" The muffled pain in the distance was drawing near. He knew that in a minute or two he would have to hurry her away.

"Yes," she answered, "with all my heart; and shall till the last moment of my life. But I worship him, you must understand that, Norman, for I cannot be false to him, any more than to my love for you; and I shall spend all my days trying to live in the manner he likes best. But let us put all this aside," she pleaded, "for this last time that we shall ever meet, and let my arm go round your neck. I want to look at you, dear. It is such joy to see you, such keen joy, that I cannot see beyond these moments that hold it. I feel as if they were tightening into my heart—were laying hold of me, and would lift me up even beyond the sorrow."

"Rest your face on mine," he whispered, "and tell me again that you feel like my wife."

"Like your wife, who has loved you always, and will while her heart shall beat."

"My sweet—" he said, and stopped, for the pain clutched at him; he had taxed his strength to the utmost. "You must go," he gasped: "let those words be your last to me. See, you have broken your rose." He lifted it from the coverlet and looked at it. His eyes were growing dim. "I'll keep it—but you must go." She drew her arm away and silently looked at his face—stooped and kissed him with one last, hopeless kiss, and rose and left the room.

III.

HALF-PAST SEVEN from the little clock on the mantelpiece—the consultation was over, but the doctors were still talking among themselves in the drawing-room. The pain stifled him and made every breath he drew a misery. "I suppose Hamilton will come in before he goes," he said to himself, and lifted his head from the pillow and stared round the room. "If these fellows did but know it, fate's best turn has been sticking its knife into me. I shouldn't have seen her but for that. Who would have thought she had cared all these years? The bit of life that was left me isn't much to pay for that knowledge. . . . I hope it will be over before poor old Tom comes; I don't want to see the expression on his face—sorry I'm going, for I know he likes me, poor chap, and a good deal of satisfaction that, since I must, his children will get the cash. What a fool I was not to marry her! We could have made the world spin like a conjurer's plate. Perhaps I should have grown tired of her—better as it is. This pain will drive me mad. I dare say a woman would bear it without a groan—they beat us in some things. . . . Well, doctor, what have you got to say?"

"My dear Byrne, I have good news; you have taken the most extraordinary turn since the morning. There is some hope

that you may pull through." Norman Byrne stared at him in blank dismay, but the desire to live is strong in all of us, and a little pleasure took possession of him.

"What a strange thing," he said; "but you are making me into an impostor. I took leave of an old friend this afternoon and they have telegraphed for Tom. What does this pain mean if I am not going to die?"

"A good symptom; we have ordered you something to calm it down. You must go to sleep and not talk. Wicks knows precisely what to do. I shall come very early in the morning."

"Things have taken a queer turn. But I have no business to live," Byrne said to himself when the doctor was gone. "Tom with his seven children expecting me to die, and Margrave living in saintly and unconscious bigamy with my wife. It will be pretty awkward—I believe there is morphine in this medicine; I am dropping off to sleep—"

A long silence.

"Well, what now?"

"Nearly half-past nine, sir, and here's your chicken broth. You have been asleep these two hours—the longest sleep you have had this week."

"Leave me alone, Wicks, and go about your business. I want to think."

"The doctor said you must take food, sir."

"Plenty of time, Wicks; perhaps nothing will come of it after all. There, I have finished your confounded chicken broth; take the cup out of my sight, do anything you have to do, and go. I cannot stand any one in the room."

"All right, sir;" but he lingered by the bed. "Dunn was looking out of window just now, sir," he said in a low voice, "and saw Lady Margrave go along on the other side of the road. Dunn says she has seen her go by two or three times every evening with her face turned over here, but she didn't know who she was till she came to-day. She stood a bit looking up at your window; of course she didn't know that Dunn saw her—"

"Has she gone?"

"Dunn saw her get into a hansom a little way up, or she would have run out and told her you were better."

"It is better to be sure first. Put the bell-rope by my hand, Wicks, and go."

"Yes, sir, but I must come in and give you your medicine in an hour—"

"What's the good of it? Leave me alone."

"There's opium in it, sir; make you comfortable for the night." Wicks took up the bottle and looked at it, and put it down on the table by the bedside. "I'll come back at eleven, sir," and he hurried softly from the room, feeling to his fingertips Mr. Byrne's impatience to get rid of him.

"Walking up and down," Norman Byrne said to himself. "It's a queer thing to be loved by a woman. I want to see her again—and to live; but I have no business to do that after this afternoon. We couldn't keep apart. I should take her away somehow. She was mine first and belongs to me; she said it herself. She called herself my wife. It's no good; we shouldn't be happy; her children would be hacking at her thoughts if she left them—and Margrave! I wonder what he'd do? Doesn't matter; I am not going to ruin any man's life and children, or any woman's either. I did once, but I didn't mean it, God knows. I wish I had her in my arms with her face against mine. I should like to feel her die in them, and to be buried with her. It would be so quiet, and we should be together till our very bones were dust. Life is such a bother—I want to be quiet and alone. I must get out of the way, that's certain. If I live she will remember everything she said to-day and hate herself; besides, we couldn't keep apart—a man and a woman who love each other, and know it, and have put it into words. . . . Poor Tom! it would be the deuce for him my not dying; his children want educating on my India stock. Besides, the scene was set for dying, and it must be carried through. These pillows are slipping down like so much hay from a stack. What's this? Her rose! My darling, my sweet woman, I would sell my soul for a fortnight to see you look as you did once when you came along the road to meet me," and he lifted the rose to his lips.

A long hour—an hour of mental struggle and pain. "It won't do," he said at last; "she called him her Christ, and said he had saved her. If I live now it will be to her damnation." He pulled the bell-rope.

"Wicks, what time is it?"

"Five minutes to eleven, sir. I was just coming."

"Give me my medicine—how much am I to take?" he asked, watching Wicks measure the dose from the bottle on the table.

"Three doses here, sir. Doctor said I was to be careful."

"It doesn't matter, a little more or less," he said, wearily, and gulped down the portion handed him. Wicks replaced the bottle among the others. "Wait," Mr. Byrne said; "give me the box with the steel handle. Open it—Bramah lock, you know. I want to fumble in it; put it by my side. Ah! there they are;" and he pulled out a little packet of letters. "Put them into the fire, Wicks. I may die yet, and shouldn't like any one to find them. There, you take away the box, and then go. Stay, I want you to open the window about three inches."

"Might do you harm, sir?"

"The curtain will make it all right—open it." Wicks, with his military habit of obedience, did as he was told. "Now, then, put the lamp low—the light bothers me—and leave the fire alone. That's right," he said with a sigh of relief, as the door closed after the man. "I wonder if she will go by again. If she does the darkness will tell her. By Jove! this is what I want—the darkness and stillness. Life would only be an anti-climax now. Besides, take it altogether, it was the best hour we ever had, the closest—it would be a pity to journey away from it. This is the kindest thing I can do for her, and the crumbs of the good deed will fall to Tom's children. Ah—there's the pain coming back again; I shall be even with it this time! My sweet, I can feel your kisses—my wife, she called herself. I wonder if she will come and pay me that visit deep down in the grave." He dragged himself inch by inch to the edge of the bed, and felt for the two remaining doses of opium. "It won't take long," he said; "I am getting drowsy already with only one." His hand shook as he emptied the

contents of the bottle into the glass; they touched each other and chinked; it sent a thrill of fright through him lest Wicks should hear and come: then it would be all up, he thought. But no—no, there was not a sound. Wicks was asleep, perhaps. "Poor chap, I expect he's worn out," his master said, and felt for the rose under his pillow. He kissed it and clutched

it tightly in his hand, then, with a great effort, raised himself on his right elbow. The darkness deepened: there was a moment's silence—a silence that seemed to wait. A shudder went through him. He felt that he must hurry; the immensities were standing still for him. He put the little glass to his lips: "Here's to my widow," he said, and drained it.



BY ED. MOTT.

coons must be a-treein' on ev'ry side o' me, not a durn sign o' them air dogs could I see or hear, an' I had to turn to an' dig fer hum 'ithout gittin' a consarned coon. Nex' mornin' I heerd th' 'stid o' chasin' coons them air dogs took arter a couple o' 'Lijer Crowbill's sheep an' follered 'em off, an' the sheep is missin'. Now, Mister Cheerman, that hain't right. 'Fore 'Lijer Crowbill an' one or two others lugged sheep inter Sugar Swamp we didn't hev no trouble 'ith our coon dogs, an' we got lots o' coon. The question comes up right here, an' we orter settle it now wunst an' fer all: Shell we quit coonin' an' stop raisin' o' coon dogs, two o' the oldest an' most pop'lar aggercul'tral pursoots o' the deestrie!—shell we quit them an' turn the kentry over to a lot o' breechy an' blattin' sheep, th' s'jest a-spilin' our dogs?—or shell we seth up the sheep-pastur's, an' let the swamps an' the hollers ring wunst more with the music o' the coon dog an' the coon a-treein'? Feller-tillers, shell we slap a tariff heavier'n a ten-acre stum lot on sheep an' keep 'em outen Sugar Swamp, perfect our dogs f'm furrin' inte'rence, an' cheapen coon meat?—or shell we put wool on the free list, ruinate our dogs, an' make coon meat sea'cer'n higher th'n cowcumber in Janiary? Mister Cheerman, says Lunk, 'be we ready fer the question? If we be,' says he, 'let the ayes hev it.'

Then Lunk he set down. Nobody didn't say nothin' fer a minute or more, but kep' a-chawin' their cuds like a passel o' cows noonin' in a pastur'. Pooty soon o' Sol Beeps he gits up. Sol had jest lost the last one o' his ten sheep, all on 'em havin' ben wiped out by dogs, an' consequently he wuz jest in the humor to argy on Lunk's question.

"Mister Cheerman," says Sol, "I'm a-feelin' kinder anxious 'bout our dogs myself, but not e'zactly like the hard-workin' farmer f'm Lost Crow Barren, ez jest set down, feels. I hain't ag'in sheep, but, contrariways, I hev riz up to say th' thuz only one thing to be did in this tounship, an' that is fer ev'rybody to turn in an' go to sheep-raisin'! We've got ten thousan' acres o' surface. I dunno how much o' that is land, but I don't think thuz enough to warrn't us in holdin' on to all them seven plows we're payin' taxes on. Thuz sixty-five dogs in the tounship, an' I tell ye sumpin's got to be did. We can't spare no dogs, 'cordin' to the way the Fartn' husban'man f'm Lost Crow Barren figures on p'itical 'conomy, that's one thing sartin'; an' dogs can't eat plows. I tell ye we've got to go to raisin' sheep, or the fust thing we know thull be two or three yaller dogs starved to death amongst us! Ez fer ourselves, mebby we kin worry through the winter by diggin' out holed-up groun'-hogs, but w'at's the poor dogs gointer do? Only las' week 'Bijer Rytop had to put his poor ol' mother on the town, an' if we don't stir our stumps them five dogs o' his'll be sufferin' next. Them sheep o' mine was only the common, ev'ry-day sort o' stock, an' I noticed th' the dogs w'at was saved to the tounship by chawin' of 'em didn't seem to eat 'em ez if the meat e'zactly tetched their palates right. That wunst do. We mustn't fool with common sheep th' the dogs turns up their noses at. We must git Cotswol's, or South Downs, or w'atever breed turns out the ch'icest mutton, so's the dogs kin hev the best th' is. We've got seven plows in the tounship an' three on 'em is rustin'. I move ye, Mister Cheerman, th' we trade off them four plows fer sheep, an' go to propergatin' mutton to save the dogs.'

"Wa-al, Sol's speech made a howl in the club. Bulgy Grifftot got up an' hollered, 'I raise a pint o' order!' Sol Beeps yelled back at him, 'If ye do,' says he, 'it's the fust thing ye ever raised! Yer farm wouldn't raise a pint o' white beans!' says he. Bulgy sassed back so loud th' Sol wuz obleeged to turn in an' mow him down an' distribut an' spread him 'round like a wet hay-cock. Follerin' that perceedin' the club adjourned, mostly by way o' the back winders, an' f'm the news I git f'm thar, squire, it looks ez if aggercul'tur in the Sugar Swamp Deestrie' had ben set back ten year!"

Where?

And all illusion of delight.
Whence came they? Whither do they go?
"Where is the wind when it don't blow?"

Where art thou, Loyse? and the years,
The years of loving thee? All gone,
Like June rose-petals, one by one—
Their damask dust, their dew-drops tears.

What of the heart that willed it so?
"Where is the wind when it don't blow?"

Where is youth's wild enchantment fled?—
Its mystery, its motive grand?

Where is the fabled Lotos land?

And what of life when we are dead?

I am a child, and fain would know—
"Where is the wind when it don't blow?"

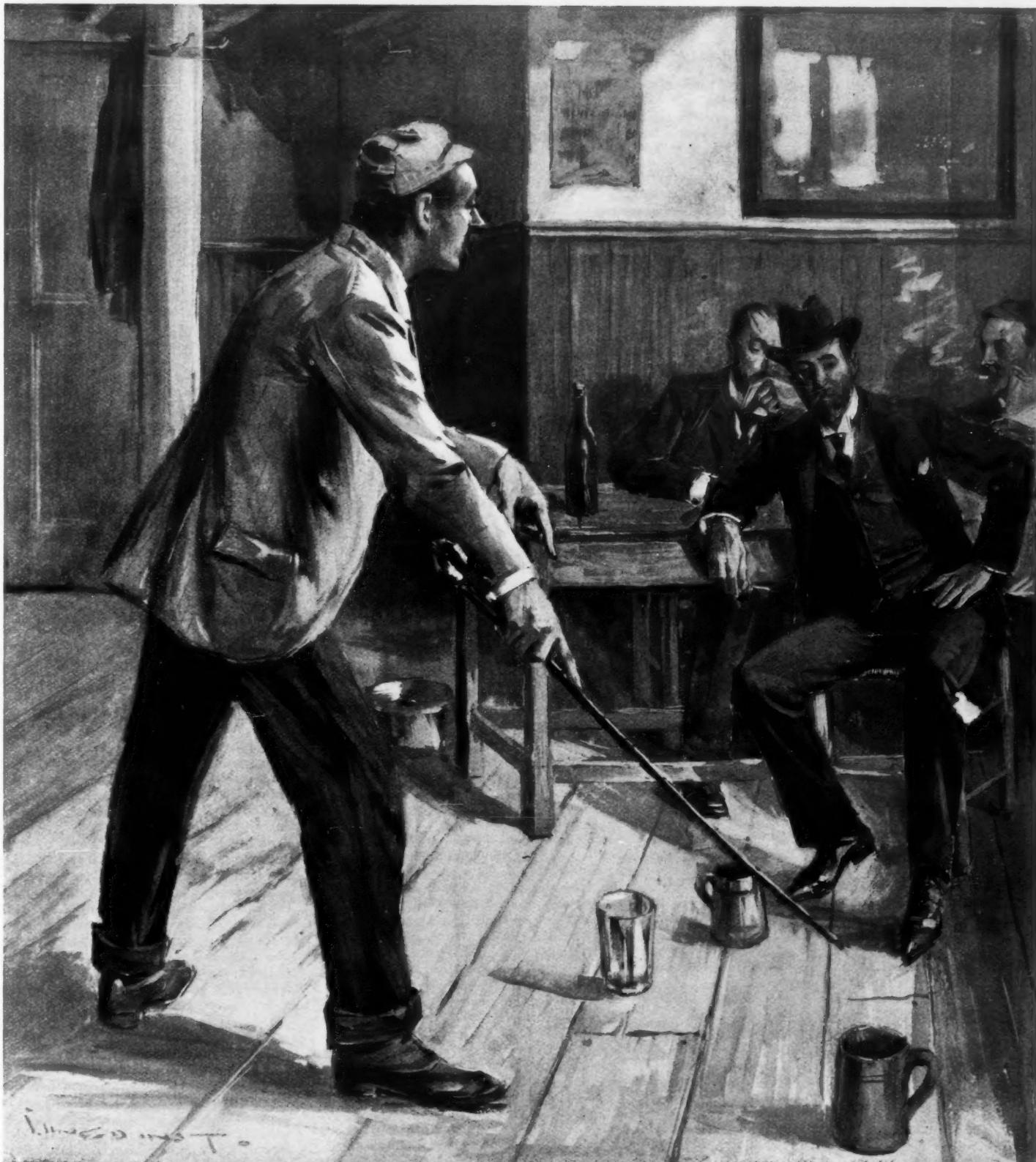
HENRY TYRRELL.



HAPPY NEW YEAR, BABY!

HAPPY New Year, Baby ! thine are just begun—
Years of rosy footsteps, blithely may they run.
Childhood yet beyond thee proffers fun and play
Further on the shadows lie, oh ! so far away.

Sunlight shimmers o'er thee from the morning skies ;
Heaven smiles before thee, in thy nother's eyes.
Laughing in her arms, Baby, in that light divine,
Love, the sweetest life can give, is this moment thine.



"After one of these flights of invention he would pace up and down in his jerky, quick-stepping fashion."

STARK MUNRO LETTERS

As written by J. Stark Munro to his friend and former fellow-student, Herbert Swanborough, of Lowell, Massachusetts, during the years 1881-84.

EDITED AND ARRANGED BY A. CONAN DOYLE.

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FOREWORD.

THE letters of my late friend, Dr. Stark Munro, appear to me to form so connected a whole, and to give so plain an account of some of the troubles which a young man may be called upon to face at the outset of his career, that I have handed them over to the gentleman who is about to edit them. There are two of them, the fifth and the ninth, from which some excisions are necessary, but, in the main, I hope that they may be reproduced as they stand, for I know that nothing could be more abhorrent

to my friend's nature than that there should be any suppression of those opinions which he had deliberately formed. As to the propriety of the publication, I can only say that, after careful consideration, I have fully satisfied myself upon that head, for I am sure that there is no privilege which he would have valued more highly than the thought that some other young man, harassed by pecuniary troubles and by spiritual doubts, should gain strength by reading how a brother had passed down the valley of the shadow before him.

H. SWANBOROUGH.
LOWELL, MASS.

I.

I MISS you most dreadfully, my dear old Bertie, for you are

never were much in the athletic set, and so it is possible that you don't. Any way, I'll take it for granted that you don't, and explain it all *ab initio*. I'm sure that you would know his photograph, however, for the reason that he was the ugliest and queerest-looking man of our year.

Physically, he was a fine athlete—one of the fastest and most determined Rugby forwards that I have ever known, though he played so savage a game that he was never given his international cap. He was well-grown, five foot nine, perhaps, with square shoulders, an arching chest, and a quick, jerky way of walking. He had a square, strong head, bristling with short, wiry, black hair. His face was wonderfully ugly, but it was the ugliness of character, which is as attractive as beauty. His jaw and eyebrows were craggy and rough-hewn, his nose aggressive and red-shot, his eyes small and near-set, light blue in color, and capable of assuming a very genial and also an exceedingly vindictive expression. A slight wiry mustache covered his upper lip, and his teeth were yellow, strong, and overlapping, like those of an animal. Add to this that he seldom wore collar or necktie, that his throat was the color and texture of the bark of a Scotch fir, and that he had a voice, and especially a laugh, like a bull's bellow: then you have some idea (if you can piece all these items together in your mind) of the outward James Cullingworth.

But the inner man, after all, was what was most worth noting. I don't quite know what genius is. Carlyle's definition always seemed to me to be a very crisp and clear statement of what it is not. Far from its being an infinite capacity for taking pains, its leading characteristic, as far as I have ever been able to observe it, has been that it allows the possessor of it to attain results by a sort of instinct which other men could only reach by hard work. In this sense Cullingworth was the greatest genius that I have ever known. He never seemed to work, and yet he took the anatomy prize over the heads of all

Can you remember Cullingworth at the university? You

CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF

the ten-hour-a-day men. That might not count for much, for he was quite capable of idling ostentatiously all day and then reading desperately all night, but start a subject of your own for him, and then see his originality and strength. Talk about torpedoes, and he would catch up a pencil, and on the back of an old envelope from his pocket he would sketch out some novel contrivance for piercing a ship's netting and getting at her side, which might no doubt involve some technical impossibility, but which would at least be quite plausible and new. Then, as he drew, his bristling eyebrows would contract, his small eyes would gleam with excitement, his lips would be pressed together, and he would end by banging on the paper with his open hand and shouting in his exultation. You would think that his one mission in life was to invent torpedoes. But next instant, if you were to express surprise as to how it was that the Egyptian workmen elevated the stones to the top of the pyramids, out would come the pencil and envelope, and he would propound a scheme for doing that with equal energy and conviction. This ingenuity was joined to an extremely sanguine nature. After one of these flights of invention he would take out patents for it, receive you as his partner in the enterprise, have it adopted in every civilized country, see all conceivable applications of it, count up his probable royalties, sketch out the novel methods in which he would invest his gains, and finally retire with the most gigantic fortune that has ever been amassed, as he paced up and down in his jerky, quick-stepping fashion. And you would be swept along by his words, and would be carried every foot of the way with him, so that it would come as quite a shock to you when you suddenly fell back to earth again, and found yourself trudging the city street, a poor student with Foster's "Physiology" under your arm, and hardly the price of your luncheon in your pocket.

I read over what I have written, but I can see that I give you no real insight into the demoniac cleverness of Cullingworth. His views upon medicine were most revolutionary, but I dare say I shall have a good deal to say about them in the sequel. With his brilliant and unusual gifts, his fine athletic record, his strange way of dressing (his hat on the back of his head and his throat bare), his thundering voice, and his ugly, powerful face, he had quite the most marked individuality of any man that I have ever known.

Now you will think me very prolix about this man, but as it looks as if his life might become entwined with mine, it is a subject of immediate interest to me, and I am writing all this for the purpose of reviving my own recollections as well as in the hope of amusing and interesting you. So I must just give you one or two other impressions which may make his character more clear to you.

He had a dash of the heroic in him. On one occasion he was placed in such a position that he must choose between compromising a lady or springing out of a third-story window. Without a moment's hesitation he hurled himself out of the window. As luck would have it, he fell through a large laurel-bush on to a garden-plot which was soft with rain, and so escaped with a shaking and a bruising. If I have to say anything that gives a bad impression of the man, put that upon the other side.

He was fond of rough horse-play, but it was wiser to avoid it with him, for one could never tell what it might lead to. His temper was nothing less than infernal. I have seen him in the dissecting-rooms begin to skylark with a fellow, and then in an instant the fun would go out of his face, his little eyes would gleam with fury, and the two would be rolling, worrying each other like dogs below the table. He would be dragged off, panting and speechless with fury, with his wiry hair bristling straight up, like a fighting terrier's.

This pugnacious side of his character would be worthily used sometimes. I remember that an address which was being given to us by an eminent London specialist was much interrupted by a fellow in the front row who kept on injecting remarks. I suppose that he was drunk, though he seemed to know what he was about. The lecturer appealed to his audience at last. "These interruptions are insufferable, gentlemen," said he; "will no one free me from this annoyance?" "Hold your tongue—you, sir, on the front bench!" cried Cullingworth, in his bull's bellow. "Perhaps you'll make me," said the fellow, turning a contemptuous face over his shoulder. Cullingworth closed his note-book and began to walk down on the tops of the desks, to the delight of the three hundred spectators. It was fine to see the deliberate way in which he picked his way among the ink-bottles. As he sprang down from the last bench on to the floor his opponent struck him a smashing blow full in the face. Cullingworth got his bull-dog grip on him, however, and rushed him backward out of the class-room. What he did with him I don't know, but there was a noise like the delivery of a ton of coals, and the champion of law and order returned with the sedate air of a man who had done his work. His eyes were like two damsons on each side of a piece of beet-root, but we gave him three cheers as he made his way back to his seat. Then we went on with the dangers of *Placenta Frævia*.

He was not a man who drank hard, but a little drink would have a very great effect upon him. Then it was that the ideas would surge from his brain, each more fantastic and ingenious than the last. And if ever he did get beyond the borderland he would do the most amazing things. Sometimes it was the fighting instinct that would possess him, sometimes the preaching, and sometimes the comic; or, they might come in succession, replacing each other so rapidly as to bewilder his companions. Intoxication brought all kinds of queer little peculiarities with it. One of them was that he could walk or run perfectly straight, but that there always came a time when he unconsciously turned upon his tracks and retraced his steps again. This had a strange effect sometimes, as in the instance of which I am going to tell you.

Very sober to outward seeming, but in a turmoil within, he went down to the station one night and, stooping to the pigeon-hole, asked the ticket clerk, in the suavest voice, whether he could tell him how far it was to London. The official put forward his face to reply, when Cullingworth drove his fist through the little hole with the force of a piston. The clerk flew backward off his stool, and his yell of pain and indignation brought some police and railway men to his assistance.

They pursued Cullingworth, but he, as active and as fit as a greyhound, outraced them all and vanished into the darkness down the long, straight street. The pursuers had stopped, and were gathered in a knot under a lamp-post, talking the matter over, when, looking up, they saw, to their amazement, the man whom they were after, running at the top of his speed in their direction. His little peculiarity had asserted itself, you see, and he had unconsciously turned in his flight. They tripped him up, flung themselves upon him, and after a long and desperate struggle, got him to the police-station. He was charged before the magistrate next morning, but made such a brilliant speech from the dock in his own defense that he carried the court with him, and escaped with a nominal fine. At his invitation the witnesses and the police trooped after him to the nearest hotel, and the affair ended in universal whisky-and-soda.

Well now, if, after all these illustrations, I have failed to give you some notion of the man—able, magnetic, unscrupulous, violent, many-sided—I must despair of ever doing so. I'll suppose, however, that I have not failed, and I will proceed to tell you, my most patient of confidants, something of my personal relations with Cullingworth.

When I first made a casual acquaintance with him he was a bachelor. At the end of a long vacation, however, he met me in the street and told me, in his loud-voiced, volcanic, shoulder-slapping way, that he had just been married. At his invitation I went up with him then and there to see his wife, and as we walked he told me the history of his wedding, which was as extraordinary as everything else he did. I won't tell it to you here, my dear Bertie, for I feel that I have dived down too many side-streets already, but it was a most bustling business, in which the locking of a governess into her room and the dyeing of Cullingworth's hair played prominent parts. Apropos of the latter, he was never quite able to get rid of its traces, and from this time forward there was, added to his other peculiarities, the fact that when the sunlight struck upon his hair at certain angles it turned it all iridescent and shimmering.

Well, I went up to his lodgings with him and was introduced to Mrs. Cullingworth. She was a timid little sweet-faced, gray-eyed woman, quiet-voiced and gentle-mannered. You had only to see the way in which she looked at him to understand that she was absolutely under his control, and that, do what he might, or say what he might, it would always be the best thing to her. She could be obstinate, too, in a gentle, dove-like sort of way, but her obstinacy lay always in the direction of backing up his sayings and doings. This, however, I was only to find out afterward, and at that, my first visit, she impressed me as being one of the sweetest little women that I had ever known.

They were living in the most singular style in a suite of four small rooms over a grocer's shop. There was a kitchen, a bed-room, a sitting-room, and a fourth room, which Cullingworth insisted upon regarding as a most unhealthy apartment and a focus of disease, though I am convinced that it was nothing more than the smell of cheeses from below which had given him the idea. At any rate, with his usual energy, he had not only locked the room up, but had gummed varnished paper over all the cracks of the door to prevent the imaginary contagion from spreading. The furniture was of the sparest. There were, I remember, only two chairs in the sitting-room, so that when a guest came (and I think I was the only one) Cullingworth used to squat upon a pile of yearly volumes of the *British Medical Journal* in the corner. I can see him now, levering himself up from his lowly seat and striding about the room, roaring and striking with his hands, while his little wife sat mutely in the corner, listening to him with love and admiration in her eyes. What did we care, any one of the three of us, where we sat or how we lived as long as youth throbbed hot in our veins and our souls were all afame with the possibilities of life! I look upon those Bohemian evenings in the bare room, amid the smell of the cheese, as being among the happiest that I have known.

I was a frequent visitor to the Cullingworths, for the pleasure that I got was made the sweeter by the pleasure which I hoped that I gave. They knew no one, and desired to know no one, so that socially I seemed to be the only link that bound them to the world. I even ventured to interfere in the details of their little *ménage*. Cullingworth had a fad at the time that the diseases of civilization were due to the abandonment of the out-of-door life of our ancestors, and, as a corollary, he kept all his windows open day and night. As his wife was obviously fragile, and yet would have died before she would have uttered a word of complaint, I took it upon myself to point out to him that the cough from which she suffered was hardly to be cured as long as she spent her life in a draught. He scowled savagely at me for interference, and I thought we were on the verge of a quarrel, but it blew over, and he became more considerate in the matter of ventilation.

Our evening occupations just about that time were of a most extraordinary character. You are aware that there is a substance called waxy matter which is deposited in the tissues of the body during the course of certain diseases. What this may be and how it is formed has been a cause for much bickering among pathologists. Cullingworth had strong views upon the subject, holding that the waxy matter was really the same thing as the glycogen which is normally secreted by the liver. But it is one thing to have an idea, and another to be able to prove it. Above all, we wanted some waxy matter with which to experiment. But fortune favored us in the most magical way. The professor of pathology had come into possession of a magnificent specimen of the condition. With pride he exhibited the organ to us in the class-room before ordering his assistant to remove it to the ice-chest, preparatory to its being used for microscopical work in the practical class. Cullingworth saw his chance and acted on the instant. Slipping out of the class-room, he threw open the ice-chest, rolled his ulster round the dreadful glistening mass, closed the chest again, and walked quietly away. I have no doubt that to this day the disappearance of that waxy liver is one of the most inexplicable mysteries in the career of our professor.

That evening, and for many evenings to come, we worked upon our liver. Nothing came of all our work, for, though

Cullingworth considered that he had absolutely established his case, and wrote long screeds to the medical papers upon the subject, he was never good at stating his views with his pen, and he left, I am sure, a very confused idea on the minds of his readers as to what it was that he was driving at. Again, as he was a mere student without any letters after his name, he got scant attention, and I never heard that he gained over a single supporter.

At the end of the year we both passed our examinations and became duly-qualified medical men. The Cullingworths vanished away, and I never heard any more of them, for he was a man who prided himself upon never writing a letter. His father had formerly had a very large and lucrative practice in the West of Scotland, but he had been dead some years. I had a vague idea, founded upon some chance remark of his, that he had gone to see whether the family name might still stand him in good stead there. As for me, I began, as you will remember I explained in my last,* by acting as assistant in my father's practice. You know, however, that at its best it is not worth more than five hundred pounds a year, with no room for expansion. This is not large enough to keep two of us at work. Then, again, I can see that my religious opinions annoy the dear old man. Why express them? you will say. Well, I try to keep the muzzle on, but there are times when I can see that his acute brain, hampered only by its early training, is struggling through the darkness and toward the light. Then I try to give him a hand, and with my blunt tongue I overdo it and shock him into a reaction. On the whole, and for every reason, I think that it would be better if I were out of this. I applied for several steamship lines, and for at least a dozen house-surgeons, but there is as much competition for a miserable post with a hundred a year as if it were the viceroyship of India. Usually, I simply get my testimonials returned without any comment, which is the sort of thing that teaches a man humility. Of course it is very pleasant to live with the Mater, and my little brother Paul is a regular trump. I am teaching him boxing, and you should see him put his little fists up, and counter with his right. He got me under the jaw this evening, and I had to ask for poached eggs for supper.

And all this brings me up to the present time and the latest news. This is that I had a telegram from Cullingworth this morning—after nine months' silence. It was dated from Avonmouth, the town where I had suspected he had settled, and it said simply, "Come at once. I have urgent need of you.—CULLINGWORTH." Of course I shall go by the first train to-morrow. It may mean anything or nothing. In my heart of hearts I hope and believe that old Cullingworth sees an opening for me, either as his partner or in some other way. I always believed that he would turn up trumps, and make my fortune as well as his own. He knows that I would work like a horse. So that's what I've been up to all along, Bertie, that to-morrow I go to join Cullingworth, and that it looks as if there was to be an opening for me at last. I gave you a sketch of him and his ways, so that you may take an interest in the development of my fortune, which you could not do if you did not know something of the man who is holding out his hand to me.

Yesterday was my birthday, and I was two and twenty years of age. For two and twenty years have I adhered by the soles of my feet and swung round the sun. And in all seriousness, without a touch of levity, and from the bottom of my soul, I assure you that I have at the present moment the very vaguest idea as to whence I have come, or whether I am going, or what I am here for. It is not for want of inquiry, or from indifference. I have mastered the principles of several religions. They have all shocked me by the violence which I should have to do to my reason to accept any one of them. Their ethics are usually excellent. So are the ethics of the Common Law of England. But the scheme of creation upon which those ethics are built! Well, it really is to me the most astonishing thing that I have seen in my short earthly pilgrimage that so many able men, deep philosophers, astute lawyers, and clear-headed men of the world should accept such an explanation of the facts of life. In the face of their concurrence my own poor little opinion would not dare to do more than lurk at the back of my soul, were it not that I take courage when I reflect that the equally eminent lawyers and philosophers of Rome and Greece were all agreed that Jupiter had numerous wives, and was fond of a glass of good wine.

Mind, my dear Bertie, I do not wish to run down your view or that of any other man. We who claim toleration should be the first to extend it to others. I am only indicating my own position, as I have often done before. And I know your reply so well. Can't I hear your grave voice saying "Have faith"? Your conscience allows you to. Well, mine won't allow me; I see so clearly that faith is not a virtue, but a vice. It is a goat which has been herded with the sheep. If a man deliberately shut his eyes and refused to use them, you would be as quick as any one in seeing that it was immoral and a treason to nature. And yet you would counsel a man to shut that far more precious gift, the reason, and to refuse to use it in the most intimate question of life.

"The reason cannot help in such a matter," you reply. I answer that to say so is to give up a battle before it is fought. My reason shall help me, and when it can help no longer I shall do without help.

It's late, Bertie, and the fire's out and I'm shivering, and you, I am very sure, are heartily weary of my gossip and my heresies; so adieu until my next.

II.

WELL, my dear Bertie, here I am again in your post-box. It's only a fortnight since I wrote you that great long letter, and yet you see I have news enough to make another formidable budget. They say that the art of letter-writing has been lost, but if quantity may atone for quality, you must confess that (for your sins) you have a friend who has retained it.

When I wrote to you last I was on the eve of going down to join the Cullingworths at Avonmouth, with every hope that

* The letter alluded to has, unfortunately, been lost.

LESLIE'S WEEKLY.

he had found some opening for me. I must tell you at some length the particulars of that expedition.

I traveled down part of the way with young Leslie Duncan, whom I think you know. He was gracious enough to consider that a third-class carriage and my company were to be preferred to a first-class with solitude. You know that he came into his uncle's money a little time ago, and, after a first delirious out-break, he has now relapsed into that dead heavy state of despair which is caused by having everything which he can wish for. How absurd are the ambitions of life when I think that I, who am fairly happy and as keen as a razor-edge, should be struggling for that which I can see has brought neither profit nor happiness to him! And yet if I can read my own nature it is not the accumulation of money which is my real aim, but only that I may acquire so much as will relieve my mind of sordid cares, and enable me to develop any gifts which I may have, undisturbed. My tastes are so simple that I cannot imagine any advantage which wealth can give—save, indeed, the exquisite pleasure of helping a good man or a good cause. Why should people ever take credit for charity when they must know that they cannot gain as much pleasure out of their guineas in any other fashion? I gave my watch to a broken school-master the other day (having no money in my pocket), and my mother could not quite determine whether it was a trait of madness or of nobility. I could have told her with absolute confidence that it was neither the one nor the other, but a sort of epicurean selfishness, with perhaps a little dash of swagger away down at the bottom of it. What had I ever had from my chronometer like the quiet thrill of satisfaction when the fellow brought me the pawn-ticket and told me that the thirty shillings had been useful?

Leslie Duncan got out at Carstairs, and I was left alone with a hale, white-haired old Roman Catholic priest, who had sat quietly reading his office in the corner. We fell into the most intimate talk, which lasted all the way to Avonmouth—indeed, so interested was I that I very nearly passed through the place without knowing it. Father Logan (for that was his name) seemed to me to be a beautiful type of what a priest should be, self-sacrificing and pure-minded, with a kind of simple cunning about him, and a deal of innocent fun. He had the defects as well as the virtues of his class, for he was absolutely reactionary in his views. We discussed religion with fervor, and his theology was somewhere about the early pliocene. He might have chatted the matter over with a priest of Charlemagne's court, and they would have shaken hands after every sentence. He would acknowledge this, and claim it as a merit. It was consistency in his eyes. If our astronomers and inventors and lawgivers had been equally consistent, where would modern civilization be? Is religion the only domain of thought which is non-progressive, and to be referred forever to a standard set two thousand years ago? Can they not see that, as the human brain evolves, it must take a wider outlook? A half-formed brain makes a half-formed God, and who shall say that our brains are even half-formed yet? The true inspired priest is the man or woman with the big brain. It is not the shaven patch on the outside, but it is the sixty ounces within which is the true mark of election.

You know that you are turning up your nose at me, Bertie; I can see you do it. But I'll come off the thin ice, and you shall have nothing but facts now. I am afraid that I should never do for a story-teller, for the first stray character that comes along puts his arm in mine and walks me off with my poor story straggling away to nothing behind me.

Well, then, it was night when we reached Avonmouth, and when I popped my head out of the carriage window, the first thing that my eyes rested upon was old Cullingworth standing in the circle of light under the gas-lamp. His frock coat was flying open, his waistcoat unbuttoned at the top, and his hat (a top-hat this time) jammed on the back of his head, with his bristling hair spouting out in front of it. In every way, save that he wore a collar, he was the same Cullingworth as ever. He gave a roar of recognition when he saw me, hustled me out of my carriage, seized my carpet-bag, and a minute later we were striding along together through the streets.

I was, as you may imagine, all in a tingle to know what it was that he wanted with me. However, as he made no allusion to it, I did not care to ask, and during our longish walk we talked about indifferent matters. It was foot-ball first, I remember—whether Richmond had a chance against Blackheath, and the way in which the new passing game was shredding the old scrimmages. Then he got on to inventions, and became so excited that he had to give me back my bag in order that he might be able to slap all his points home with his fist upon his palm. I can see him now, stopping with his face leaning forward and his yellow tusks gleaming in the lamp-light.

"My dear Munro"—this was the style of the thing—"why was armor abandoned—eh? What! I'll tell you why. It was because the weight of metal that would protect a man who was standing up was more than he could carry. But battles are not fought nowadays by men who are standing up. Your infantry are all lying on their stomachs, and it would take very little to protect them. And steel has improved, Munro! Chilled steel! Bessemer! Bessemer! Very good. How much to cover a man? Fourteen inches by twelve, meeting at an angle so that the bullet will glance. A notch at one side for the rifle. There you have it, laddie, the Cullingworth patent portable bullet-proof shield. Weight? Oh, the weight would be sixteen pounds. I worked it out. Each company carries its shields in go-carts, and they are served out on going into action. Give me twenty thousand good shots, and I'll go in at Calais and come out at Peking. Think of it, my boy! The moral effect. One side gets home every time, and the other plasters their bullets up against steel plates. No troops would stand it. The nation that gets it first will pitchfork the rest of Europe over the edge. They're bound to have it—all of them. Let's reckon it out. There's about eight million of them on a war footing. Let us suppose that only half of them have it. I say only half, because I don't want to be sanguine. That's four million, and I should take a royalty of four shillings on wholesale orders. What's that, Munro? About three-quarters of a million sterling. Eh? How's that, laddie? Eh? What?"

Well, really, that is not unlike his style of talk, now that I come to read it over, only you miss the queer stops, the sudden

confidential whispers, the roar with which he triumphantly answered his own questions, the shrugs and slaps and gesticulations. But not a word all the time as to what it was that made him send me that urgent wire which brought me to Avonmouth.

I had, of course, been puzzling in my mind as to whether he had succeeded or not, though from his cheerful appearance and buoyant talk, it was tolerably clear to me that all was well with him. I was, however, surprised when, as we walked along a quiet, curving avenue with great houses standing in their own grounds upon either side, he stopped and turned in through the iron gate which led up to one of the finest of them. The moon had broken out and shone upon the high-peaked roof and upon the gables at each corner. When he knocked, it was opened by a footman with red plush knee-breeches. I began to perceive that my friend's success must have been something colossal.

When we came down to the dining-room for supper Mrs. Cullingworth was waiting there to greet me. I was sorry to see that she was pale and weary-looking. However, we had a merry meal in the old style, and her husband's animation reflected itself upon her face, until at last we might have been back in the little room with the frying-pan, instead of in the great oak-furnished, picture-hung chamber to which we had been promoted. All the time, however, not one word as to the object of my journey.

When the supper was finished, Cullingworth led the way into a small sitting-room, where we both lit our pipes, and Mrs. Cullingworth her cigarette. He sat for some little time in silence, and then, bounding up, he rushed to the door and flung it open. It was always one of his peculiarities to think that people were conspiring against him, or listening to him, for, in spite of his superficial brusqueness and frankness, a strange vein of suspicion ran through his singular and complex nature. Having satisfied himself now that there were no eavesdroppers, he threw himself down into his arm-chair.

"Munro," said he, prodding at me with his pipe, "what I wanted to tell you is that I am utterly, hopelessly, and irretrievably ruined."

My chair was tilted on its back legs as he spoke, and I assure you that I was within an ace of going over. Down like a pack of cards came all my dreams as to the grand results which were to come from my journey to Avonmouth. Yes, Bertie, I am bound to confess it, my first thought was of my own disappointment, and my second of the misfortune of my friends. He had the most diabolical intuitions, or else I have a very tell-tale face, for he added at once:

"Sorry to disappoint you, my boy. That's not what you expected to hear, I can see."

"Well," I stammered, "it is rather a surprise, old chap. I thought from the—from the—"

"From the house and the footman and the furniture," said he—"well, they've eaten me up among them—licked me clean, bones and gravy. I'm done for, my boy, unless"—here I saw a question in his eyes—"unless some friend were to lend me his name on a bit of stamped paper."

"I can't do it, Cullingworth," said I; "it's a beastly thing to have to refuse a friend, and if I had money—"

"Wait till you're asked, Munro," he interrupted, with his ugliest of expressions. "Besides, as you have nothing and no prospects, what earthly use would *your* name on a paper be?"

"That's what I want to know," said I, feeling a little mortified none the less.

"Look here, laddie," he went on; "d'you see that pile of letters on the left of the table?"

"Yes."

"Well, those are duns. And d'you see those documents on the right? Well, those are county-court summonses. And now d'you see that?" he picked up a little ledger and showed me three or four names scribbled on the first page.

"That's the practice," he roared, and laughed until the great veins jumped out on his forehead. His wife laughed heartily also, just as she would have wept had he been so disposed.

"It's this way, Munro," said he, when he had got over his paroxysm. "You have probably heard—in fact, I have told you myself—that my father had the finest practice in Scotland. As far as I could judge, he was a man of no capacity, but, still, there you are—he had it."

I nodded and smoked.

"Well, he's been dead seven years, and fifty nets dipping into his little fish-pond. However, when I passed, I thought my best move was to come down to the old place and see whether I couldn't piece the thing together again. The name ought to be worth something, I thought. But it was no use doing the thing in a half-hearted way. Not a bit of use in that, Munro. The kind of people who came to him were wealthy, and must see a fine house and a man in livery. What chance was there of gathering them into a bow-windowed forty-pound-a-year house with a grubby-faced maid at the door? What d'you suppose I did? My boy, I took the governor's old house that was unlet. The very house that he kept up at five thousand a year. Off I started in rare style, and sank my last cent in furniture. But it's no use, my boy. I can't hold on any longer. I got two accidents and an epileptic—twenty-two pounds eight and sixpence—that's the lot!"

"What will you do, then?"

"That's what I wanted your advice about. That's why I wired for you. I always respected your opinion, laddie, and I thought now was the time to have it."

It struck me that if he had asked it nine months before there would have been more sense in it. What on earth could I do when affairs were in such a tangle? However, I could not help feeling complimented when so independent a fellow as Cullingworth turned to me in this way.

"You really think," said I, "that it is no use holding on here?"

He jumped up and began pacing the room in his swift, jerky way.

"You take warning from it, Munro," said he; "you've got to start yet. Take my tip and go where no one knows you. People will trust a stranger quick enough, but if they can remember you as a little chap who ran about in knickerbockers, and got spanked with a hair-brush for stealing plums, they are

not going to put their lives in your keeping. It's all very well to talk about friendship and family connections, but when a man has a pain in the stomach he doesn't care a toss about all that. I'd stick it up in gold letters in every medical class-room—have it carved across the gate of the university—that if a man wants friends he must go among strangers. It's all up here, Munro, so there's no use in advising me to hold on."

I asked him how much he owed. It came to about seven hundred pounds. The rent alone was two hundred. He had already raised money on the furniture, and his whole assets came to less than a tenner. Of course there was only one possible thing that I could advise.

"You must call your creditors together," said I—"they can see for themselves that you are young and energetic—sure to succeed sooner or later. If you push you into a corner now they can get nothing. Make that clear to them. But if you make a fresh start elsewhere and succeed, you may pay them all in full. I cannot see any other possible way out of it."

"I knew that you'd say that, and it's just what I thought myself. Isn't it, Hetty? Well, then, that settles it, and I am much obliged to you for your advice, and that's all we'll say about the matter to-night. I've made my shot and missed. Next time I shall hit, and it won't be long either."

His failure did not seem to weigh very heavily on his mind, for in a few minutes he was shouting away as lustily as ever. Whisky and hot water were brought in, so that we might all drink luck to the second venture.

And this whisky led us to what might have been a troublesome affair. Cullingworth, who had drunk off a couple of glasses, waited until his wife had left the room, and then began to talk of the difficulty of getting any exercise now that he had to wait in all day in the hope of patients. This led us round to the ways in which a man might take his exercise indoors, and that to boxing. Cullingworth took a couple of pairs of gloves out of a cupboard, and proposed that we should fight a round or two then and there.

If I hadn't been a fool, Bertie, I should never have consented. It's one of my many weaknesses that, whether it's a woman or a man, anything like a challenge sets me off. But I knew Cullingworth's ways, and I told you in my last what a lamb of a temper he has. None the less we pushed back the table, put the lamp on a high bracket, and stood up to one another.

The moment I looked him in the face I smelt mischief. He had a gleam of settled malice in his eye. I believe it was my refusal to back his paper which was running in his head. Anyway, he looked as dangerous as he could look, with his scowling face sunk forward a little, his hands down near his hips (for his boxing, like everything else about him, is unconventional), and his jaw set like a rat-trap.

I led off, and then in he came, hitting with both hands and grunting like a pig at every blow. From what I could see of him he was no boxer at all, but just a formidable rough-and-tumble fighter. I was guarding with both hands for half a minute, and then was rushed clean off my legs and banged up against the door with my head nearly through one of the panels. He wouldn't stop then, though he saw that I had no room to get my elbows back, and he let fly a right-hander which would have put me into the hall if I hadn't slipped it and got back to the middle of the room.

"Look here, Cullingworth," said I; "there's not much boxing about this game."

"Yes, I hit pretty hard, don't I?"

"If you come boring into me like that I'm bound to hit you out again," I said. "I want to play light if you'll let me."

The words were not out of my mouth before he was on me like a flash. I slipped him again, but the room was so small, and he as active as a cat, that there was no getting away from him. He was on me once more with a regular foot-ball rush that knocked me off my balance. Before I knew where I was he got his left on the mark, and his right on my ear. I tripped over a footstool, and then, before I could get my balance, he had me on the same ear again, and my head was singing like a tea-kettle. He was as pleased as possible with himself, blowing out his chest and slapping it with his palms as he took his place in the middle of the room.

"Say when you've had enough, Munro," said he.

This was pretty stiff, considering that I have two inches the better of him in height, and as many stone in weight, besides being the better boxer. His energy and the size of the room had been against me so far, but he wasn't to have all the slugging to himself in the next round if I could help it.

In he came with one of his wind-mill rushes. But I was on the lookout for him this time. I landed him with my left a regular nose-ender as he came, and then, ducking under his left, I got him a cross-counter on the jaw that laid him flat across his own hearth-rug. He was up in an instant with a face like a madman.

"You swine!" he shouted. "Take those gloves off and put your hands up!" He was tugging at his own to get them off.

"Go on, you silly ass!" said I. "What is there to fight about?"

"By Crums, Munro!" he cried, "if you don't take those gloves off I'll go for you whether you have them or not."

"Have a glass of soda-water," said I.

He made a crack at me. "You're afraid of me, Munro. That's what's the matter with you," he snarled.

This was getting too hot, Bertie. I saw all the folly of the thing. I believe that I could lick him, but at the same time I knew that we were so much of a match that we would both get pretty badly cut up without any possible object to serve. For all that I took my gloves off, and I think, perhaps, it was my wisest course after all. If Cullingworth once thought he had the whiphand of you, you might be sorry for it afterward.

But, as fate would have it, our little barney was nipped in the bud. Mrs. Cullingworth came into the room at that instant, and screamed out when she saw her husband. His nose was bleeding, and his chin was all slobbered with blood, so that I don't wonder that it gave her a turn.

"James!" she screamed; and then to me, "What is the meaning of this, Mr. Munro?"

You should have seen the hatred in her dove's eyes. I felt an insane impulse to pick her up and kiss her.



UNCLE NED'S DILEMMA: "HOW SHALL THE CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS BE FILLED?"—DRAWN BY HOWARD HELMICK.



THE LAST OF THE CHRISTMAS SHOPPING.—DRAWN BY B. WEST CLINEDINST.

CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF

"We've only been having a little spar, Mrs. Cullingworth," said I. "Your husband was complaining that he never got any exercise."

"It's all right, Hetty," said he, pulling his coat on again. "Don't be a little stupid. Are the servants gone to bed? Well, you might bring some water in a basin from the kitchen. Sit down, Munro, and light your pipe again. I have a hundred things that I want to talk to you about."

So that was the end of it, and things went smoothly for the rest of the evening. But for all that the little wife will always look upon me as a brute and a bully, while as to Cullingworth—well, it's rather difficult to say what Cullingworth thinks about the matter.

When I woke next morning he was in my room, and a funny-looking object he was. His dressing-gown lay on a chair, and he was putting up a fifty-six pound dumb-bell without a rag to cover him. Nature didn't give him a very symmetrical face, nor the sweetest of expressions, but he has a figure like a Greek statue. I was amused to see that both his eyes had a touch of shadow to them. It was his turn to grin when I sat up and found that my ear was about the shape and consistency of a toadstool. However, he was all for peace that morning, and chattered away in the most amiable manner possible.

I was to go back to my father's that day, but I had a couple of hours with Cullingworth in his consulting-room before I left. He was in his best form, and full of a hundred fantastic schemes by which I was to help him. His great object was to get his name into the newspapers. That was the basis of all success, according to his view. It seemed to me that he was confounding cause with effect, but I did not argue the point I laughed until my sides ached over the grotesque suggestions which poured from him. I was to lie senseless in the roadway and to be carried in to him by a sympathizing crowd, while the footman ran with a paragraph to the newspapers. But there was the likelihood that the crowd might carry me in to the rival practitioner opposite. In various disguises I was to feign fits at his very door, and to furnish fresh copy for the local press. Then I was to die—absolutely to expire—and all Scotland was to ring with how Dr. Cullingworth, of Avonmouth, had resuscitated me. His ingenious brain rang a thousand changes out of the idea, and his own impending bankruptcy was crowded right out of his thoughts by the flood of half-serious devices.

But the thing that took the fun out of him, and made him gnash his teeth and stride cursing about the room, was when he saw a patient walking up the steps which led to the door of Scarsdale, his opposite neighbor. Scarsdale had a fairly busy practice, and saw his people at home from ten to twelve, so that I got quite used to seeing Cullingworth fly out of his chair and rush raving to the window. He would diagnose the cases, too, and estimate their money value until he was bardly articulate.

"There you are!" he would suddenly yell. "See that man with a limp! Every morning he goes. Displaced semi-lunar cartilage, and a three months' job. The man's worth thirty-five shillings a week. And there! I'm hanged if the woman with the rheumatic arthritis isn't round in her bath-chair again. She's all sealskin and lactic acid. It's simply sickening to see how they crowd to that man. And such a man! You haven't seen him. All the better for you. I don't know what the devil you are laughing at, Munro; I can't see where the fun comes in, myself."

Well, it was a short experience, that visit to Avonmouth, but I think that I shall remember it all my life. Goodness knows, you must be sick enough of the subject, but when I started with so much detail I was tempted to go on. It ended by my going back again in the afternoon, Cullingworth assuring me that he would call his creditors together as I had advised, and that he would let me know the result in a few days. Mrs. C. would hardly shake hands with me when I said good-bye, but I like her the better for that. He must have a great deal of good in him, else he could not have won her love and confidence so completely. Perhaps there is another Cullingworth behind the scenes—a softer, tenderer man, who can love and invite love. If there is, I have never got near him. And yet I may only have been tapping at the shell. Who knows? For that matter it is likely enough that he has never got at the real Johnnie Munro. But you have, Bertie, and I think that you've had a little too much of him this time, only you encourage me to this sort of excess by your sympathetic replies. Well, I've done as much as the general post-office will carry for five-pence, so I'll conclude by merely remarking that a fortnight has passed, and that I have had no news from Avonmouth, which does not in the very slightest degree surprise me. If I ever do hear anything, which is exceedingly doubtful, you may be sure that I will put a finish to this long story.

III.

WITHOUT any figure of speech I feel quite ashamed—really ashamed—when I think of you, Bertie. I send you one or two enormously long letters, burdened, as far as I can remember them, with all sorts of useless detail. Then, in spite of your kindly answers and your sympathy, which I have done so little to deserve, I drop you completely for more than six months. By this J pen I swear that it will not happen again, and this letter may serve to bridge the gap and to bring you up to date in my poor affairs, in which, of all outer mankind, you alone take an interest.

You remember that when I wrote last I had just come back from visiting the Cullingworths at Avonmouth, and he had promised to let me know what steps he took in appeasing his creditors. As I expected, I have not had one word from him since. But in a roundabout way I did get some news as to what happened. From this account, which was second-hand and may have been exaggerated, Cullingworth did exactly what I had recommended, and calling all his creditors together he made them a long statement as to his position. The good people were so touched by the picture that he drew of a worthy man fighting against adversity that several of them wept, and there was not only complete unanimity as to letting their bills stand over, but even some talk of a collection then and there to help Cullingworth on his way. He has, I understand, left

Avonmouth, but no one has any idea of what has become of him. It is generally supposed that he has gone to England. He is a strange fellow, but I wish him luck wherever he goes.

When I came back, I settled down once more to the routine of my father's practice, holding on there until something may turn up. And for six months I have had to wait—a weary six months they have been. You see, I cannot ask my father for money—or at least I cannot bring myself to hard a fight it is with him to keep the roof over our heads and pay for the modest little horse and trap which are as necessary to his trade as a goose is to a tailor. Foul fare the grasping taxman who wrings a couple of guineas from us on the plea that it is a luxury! We can just hold on; and I would not have him a pound the poorer for me. But you can understand, Bertie, that it is humiliating for a man of my age to have to go about without any money in my pocket. It affects me in so many petty ways. A poor man may do me a kindness, and I have to seem mean in his eyes. I may want a flower for a girl, and must be content to appear ungallant. Actually, although I am still captain of the cricket club, I have, on one excuse or another, to get out of playing in the out matches, as I find the railway fares too much for me. Even when we play at home I have to slink off at lunch-time and have something cheap at the confectioner's, while the others troop away to their half-crown spread. I don't know why I should be ashamed of this, since it is no fault of mine, and I hope that I don't show to any one else that I am ashamed of it, but to you, my dear Bertie, I don't mind confessing that it hurts my self-respect terribly. If you could scrape down to my inmost core you would find, I suspect, that in spite of my rough-and-ready ways I am really as sensitive as a girl and as proud as Lucifer.

I have often wondered why some of those writing fellows don't try their hands at drawing the inner life of a young man just from about the age of puberty until he begins to find his feet a little. Men are very fond of analyzing the feelings of their heroines, which they cannot possibly know anything about, while they have little to say of the inner development of their heroes, which is an experience which they have themselves undergone. I should like to try it myself, but it would need blending with fiction, and I never had a spark of imagination. But I have a vivid recollection of what I went through myself. At the time I thought—as everybody thinks—that it was a unique experience, but since I have heard the confidences of my father's patients I am convinced that it is the common lot. The shrinking, horrible shyness, alternating with occasional absurd fits of audacity which represent the reaction against it, the longing for close friendship, the agonies over imaginary slights, the extraordinary sexual doubts, the deadly fears caused by non-existent diseases, the vague emotion produced by all women, and the half-frightened thrill by particular ones, the aggressiveness caused by fear of being afraid, the sudden blacknesses, the profound self-distrust—I dare bet that you have felt every one of them. Bertie, just the same as I have, and that the first lad of eighteen whom you see out of your window is suffering from them now.

This is all a digression, however, from the fact that I have been six months at home and am very weary of it, and very pleased at the new development of which I shall have to tell you. The practice here, although unremunerative, is very busy with its three-and-sixpenny visits and guinea confinements, so that both the governor and I have had plenty to do. You know how I admire him, and yet I fear there is little intellectual sympathy between us. He appears to think that those opinions of mine upon religion and politics, which come hot from my inmost soul, have been assumed either out of indifference or bravado. So I have ceased to talk on vital subjects with him, and, though we affect to ignore it, we both know that there is a barrier there. Now, with my mother—ah, but my mother must have a paragraph to herself.

You met her, Bertie! You must remember her sweet face, her sensitive mouth, her peering, short-sighted eyes, her general suggestion of a plump little hen who is still on the alert about her chickens. But you cannot realize all that she is to me in our domestic life. Those helpful fingers, that sympathetic brain! Ever since I can remember her she has been the quaintest mixture of the housewife and the woman of letters, with the high-spirited lady as a basis for either character. Always a lady, whether she was bargaining with the butcher, or breaking in a skittish charwoman, or stirring the porridge, which I can see her doing, with the porridge-stick in one hand and the other holding her *Revue des deux Mondes* within two inches of her dear nose. That was always her favorite reading, and I can never think of her without the association of its brown-yellow cover.

She is a very well-read woman, is the mater; she keeps up to date in French literature, as well as in English, and can talk by the hour about the Goncourts and Flaubert and Gautier. Yet she is always hard at work, and how she imbibes all her knowledge is a mystery. She reads when she knits, she reads when she scrubs, she even reads when she feeds her babies. We have a little joke against her, that at an interesting passage she deposited a spoonful of rusk and milk into my little sister's earhole, the child having turned her head at the critical instant. Her hands are worn with work, and yet where is the idle woman who has read as much?

Then there is her family pride. That is a very vital portion of the mother. You know how little I think of such things. If the esquire were to be snipped once and forever from the tail of my name, I should be lighter for it. But, *ma foi!* (to use her own favorite expletive) it would not do to say this to her. On the Packenham side (she is a Packenham), the family can boast of some fairly-good men—I mean on the direct line—but when we get on the side branches there is not a monarch upon earth who does not roost on that huge family tree. Not once, nor twice, but thrice did the Plantagenets intermarry with us; the Dukes of Brittany courted our alliance, and the Percies of Northumberland intertwined themselves with our whole illustrious record. So in my boyhood she would expound the matter with hearth-brush in one hand and a glove full of cinders in the other, while I would sit swinging my knickerbockered legs, swelling with pride, until my waistcoat was as tight as a

sausage-skin, as I contemplated the gulf which separated me from all other little boys who swung their legs upon tables. To this day, if I chance to do anything of which she strongly approves, the dear heart can say no more than that I am a thorough Packenham; while, if I fall away from the straight path, she says, with a sigh, that there are points in which I take after the Munros.

She is broad-minded and intensely practical in her ordinary moods, though open to attacks of romance. I can recollect her coming to see me at a junction through which my train passed, with a six months' absence on either side of the incident. We had five minutes' conversation, my head out of the carriage window. "Wear flannel next your skin, my dear boy, and never believe in eternal punishment," was her last item of advice as we rolled out of the station. Then, to finish her portrait, I need not tell you, who have seen her, that she is young-looking and comely to be the mother of about thirty-five feet of humanity. She was in the railway-carriage and I on the platform, the other day. "Your husband had better get in or we'll go without him," said the guard. As we went off the mother was fumbling furiously in her pocket, and I know that she was looking for a shilling.

Ah, what a gossip I have been! And all to lead up to the one sentence, that I could not have stayed at home this six months if it had not been for the company and the sympathy of my mother.

Well, now I want to tell you about the scrape that I got myself into. I suppose that I ought to pull a long face over it, but for the life of me I can't help laughing. I have got you almost up to date in my history now, for what I am going to tell you happened only last week. I must mention no names here, even to you, for the curse of Ernulphus, which includes eight and forty minor imprecations, be upon the head of the man who kisses and tells.

You must know, then, that within the boundaries of this city there are two ladies, a mother and a daughter, whom I shall call Mrs. and Miss Laura Andrews. They are patients of the governor's, and have become, to some extent, friends of the family. Madame is Welsh, charming in appearance, dignified in her manners, and high church in her convictions. The daughter is rather taller than the mother, but, otherwise, they are strikingly alike. The mother is thirty-six and the daughter eighteen. Both are exceedingly charming. Had I to choose between them I think, *entre nous*, that the mother would have attracted me most, for I am thoroughly of Balzac's opinion as to the woman of thirty. However, fate was to will it otherwise.

It was coming home from a dance which first brought Laura and me together. You know how easily and suddenly these things happen, beginning in playful teasing, and ending in something a little warmer than friendship. You squeeze the slender arm, which is passed through yours, you venture to take the little gloved hand, you say good-night at absurd length in the shadow of the door. It is innocent and very interesting. Love trying his wings in a first little flutter. He will keep his sustained flight later on the better for the practice. There was never any question of engagements between us, nor any suggestion of harm. She knew that I was a poor devil, with neither means nor prospects, and I knew that her mother's will was her law, and that her course was already marked out for her. However, we exchanged our little confidences, and met occasionally by appointment, and tried to make our own lives brighter without darkening those of any one else. I can see you shake your head here, and growl—like the comfortable married man that you are—that such relations are very dangerous. So they are, my boy, but neither of us cared; she out of innocence and I out of recklessness, for, from the beginning, all the fault in the matter was mine.

Well, matters were in this state when, one day last week a note came up to the Dad, saying that Mrs. Andrews's servant was ill, and would he come at once. The old man had a touch of gout, so I donned my professional coat and sallied forth, thinking that perhaps I might combine pleasure with business, and have a few words with Laura. Sure enough, as I passed up the gravel drive, which curves round to the door, I glanced through the drawing-room window and saw her sitting painting, with her back to the light. It was clear that she had not heard me. The hall door was ajar, and then I pushed it open; no one was in the hall. A sudden fit of roguishness came over me. I pushed the drawing-room door very slowly wider, crept in upon tiptoe, stole quietly across, and, bending down, I kissed the artist upon the nape of the neck. She turned round with a squeal, and it was the mother!

I don't know whether you have ever been in a tighter corner than that, Bertie. It was quite tight enough for me. I remember that I smiled as I stole across the carpet on that insane venture. I did not smile again that evening. It makes me hot now when I think of it.

Well, I made the most dreadful fool of myself. At first the good lady, who (as I think I told you) is very dignified and rather reserved, could not believe her senses. Then, as the full force of my enormity came upon her, she reared herself up until she seemed the tallest and the coldest woman I had ever seen. It was an interview with a refrigerator. She asked me what I had ever observed in her conduct which had encouraged me to subject her to such an outrage. I saw, of course, that any excuses on my part would put her on the right tack and give poor Laura away, so I stood with my hair bristling and my top hat in my hand, presenting, I am sure, a most extraordinary figure. Indeed, she looked rather funny herself, with her palette in one hand, her brush in the other, and the blank astonishment on her face. I stammered out something about hoping that she did not mind, which made her more angry than ever. "The only possible excuse for your conduct, sir, is that you are under the influence of drink," said she. "I need not say that we do not require the services of a medical man in that condition." I did not try to disabuse her of the idea, for really I could see no better explanation, so I beat a retreat in a very demoralized condition. She wrote a letter to my father about it in the evening, and the old man was very angry indeed. As to the mater, she is as stanch as steel, and quite prepared to prove that poor Mrs. A. was a very deep, designing person, who had laid a trap for poor innocent Johnnie. So there has

LESLIE'S WEEKLY.

been a grand row, and not a soul upon earth has the least idea of what it all means, except only yourself as you read this letter.

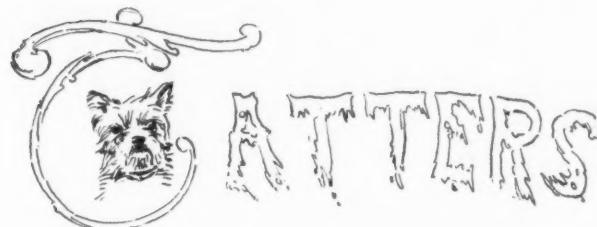
You can imagine that this has not contributed to make life here more pleasant, for my father cannot bring himself to forgive me. Of course I don't wonder at his anger. I should be just the same myself. It does look like a shocking breach of professional honor, and a sad disregard of his interests. If he knew the truth he would see that it was nothing worse than a silly, ill-timed, boyish joke. However, he never shall know the truth.

And now there is some chance of my getting something to do. We had a letter to-night from Christie and Howden, the writers to the *Signet*, saying that they desire an interview with me in view of a possible appointment. We can't imagine what it means, but I am full of hopes. I go to-morrow morning to see them, and I shall let you know the result.

Good-bye, my dear Bertie. Your life flows in a steady stream, and mine in a broken torrent. Yet I would have every detail of what happens to you.

Yours ever, J. STARK, MUNRO.

(To be continued in LESLIE'S WEEKLY of December 20th.)



BY F. M. ARMSTRONG.

MONG all the scraps of romance which I have in my life of wandering collected, I find, as I look back, that the one which includes Tatters is by all odds the most satisfactory, not only in its dramatic correctness, but also in its results; though, to tell the truth, it has always been a question with me as to whether Tatters or Teddy Archibald has the better right to the rôle of hero in the little drama which for months so agreeably diverted me.

But, as my acquaintance with Teddy somewhat antedates my introduction to Tatters, I have accepted that arrangement and have endeavored to mete out an even-handed justice in my very inadequate attempts to describe two of the most delightful creatures I have ever known.

When I first met Tatters's owner on the sea-wall at St. Augustine, I saw only a long, lazy, picturesque boy of twenty-four or five, whose air of semi-invalidism did not in the least distinguish him from the hundreds of other invalids whoadden the Floridian sunshine with the shadows of coming death. But after running across him a half-dozen times in the course of a couple of days, I discovered that he was one of the handsomest men that I had ever seen, and that furthermore he was terribly ill—and then, as if to emphasize this fact, what should Master Teddy do but take it upon himself to faint away within twenty yards of where I sat in the little phæton which, with its accompanying pony, is the one luxury from which I never separate myself. He came to his senses with creditable rapidity, and Mr. Stanfield, with whom I was indulging in a safe, middle-aged flirtation, gave up, at my suggestion, his seat at my side, to allow some ready hands among the little crowd which had collected to deposit handsome, helpless Teddy in the midst of my numerous cushions.

He was quite conscious by this time and gave me an address, to which, after some cogitation and several wrong turnings, I at length found my way. A shabby little place it was, picturesque among its orange-trees and roses, but with no suggestion of even that poor comfort which is all that the average St. Augustine boarding-house at its best affords. The ever-present darkey who emerged from the broken gate to hold my pony's head volunteered no other assistance, confining himself to the somewhat superfluous announcement, "Mist' Archibald mighty sick, sho' 'nuff," and poor Teddy was deathly white once more before we reached the open door of what my accustomed eye recognized as a very much out-at-elbows studio. A bare little room, with nothing to recommend it but a good light and plenty of ventilation, while the disorder was that of similar artistic work-shops, except that, even at the first glance, there were painful signs of poverty and physical weakness.

Teddy dropped helplessly into the only decent chair to be seen, while I, interspersing occasional words of apology, poked about in holes and corners for something in the nature of a restorative. But by the time I had begun to suspect the uselessness of my search, Teddy gasped out:

"I'm afraid you won't find anything, and really there is no need to take all that trouble. I'm coming out of it all right, you know."

But this case was one in which looks were considerably more impressive than words, and I was at my wits' ends to know what to do with the poor boy, when, at the open door, appeared Mr. Stanfield, who from that moment became unmistakably an instrument in the hands of Providence.

"The doctor is the man wanted here, I think, Miss Leigh," he said, and turning to Teddy, "Shall I bring Foster or Smith?"

Apparently Teddy had no preference, for he only shook his head, with the ghost of a smile and a long, hard breath, which sent Mr. Stanfield off like a shot—if one may be permitted to use such a comparison in connection with an elderly gentleman noted, as a rule, for his repose of manner.

Luckily the interval was not long between his departure and the moment of relief when the doctor's gray head appeared at the door. A half-dozen professional questions were asked and answered, and then something administered from the doctor's pocket case which brought back the faint color and gave a little strength to the tired voice.

"How long have you been here? Three weeks, eh? Seen no doctor? That's bad; ought to have somebody looking after you. All alone, too? H'm, this won't do at all."

The trained eye had taken in all the surroundings, and Dr. Foster made no excuse as he drew Mr. Stanfield out of sight of the patient, whose disquietude was only too evident. In the midst of the excitement I had until then only vaguely noticed the sober face of a small terrier, who throughout the whole scene had kept close beside his master, but I suddenly remembered the little dog as Teddy's faithful attendant whenever I

herself in our society. We had to suffer occasionally, we two older ones, from her sarcasms on our devotion, and when I spoke of our "partie carrée" I made a flagrant omission, for it was usually Tatters who was Anne's companion, and their active feet carried them, well satisfied apparently with each other, for many a mile, while the three of us, of whom she spoke collectively as "the remainder," took life more easily, on the sands or in some quiet rose-garden.

But as spring drew near an indefinable sense of change in our relations to each other began to assert itself, and I could see, as I looked back over the weeks that had grown into months, that two things had happened. First, Teddy was getting well—he was no longer a passive invalid on our hands, but a young man with the fire of a new life pouring into his veins—while, though I confess that for some time I stupidly failed to connect the facts—Anne was no longer one of us. That is, for days at a time we had no more than glimpses of her bright face, while, when she did honor us with her presence, her tongue was sharper than of old, and Teddy, poor Teddy, was its victim.

But even after my old brains had got thus far on the track my chief anxiety was still because she had somehow lured Tatters, the loyal Tatters, from his allegiance to Teddy, who evidently felt the desertion as only friendless men can feel such things. It was Anne now whom Tatters obeyed, it was for Anne that his répertoire of tricks was drawn upon; his pretty ways and his devotion were all for Anne. Teddy, once again "poor Teddy," was neglected and indeed quite forsaken, and all the years through which he and Tatters had been inseparable were, for that wicked little dog, as though they had not been. Like everybody else who has had similar experiences, I wonder now at my own blindness, but then my only feeling was of pity for Teddy and annoyance with Anne. That the old "Love me, love my dog" theory had been put in practice in this instance did not occur to me, because, in the eyes of all who knew her, Anne Stanfield's fate had been for years an accepted fact. It went without saying that love and marriage had no allurements for her. She was too sensible and well-balanced for the first, and there was no room in her life for the second.

By nature strong and somewhat self-willed, all the circumstances of her training had favored a positive development which removed her from the sphere of ordinary young ladyhood, while the possession of a good many thousands in her own right and the prospect of a good many more from her father made her position, to the average lover, quite unsatisfactory.

Why should she marry? we all asked. Who, short of a fairy prince, would dare to suggest it to her? So, as I have said, Anne and Hymen were understood to have nothing to say to each other, and I was perhaps not so stupid as I seemed.

However that may be, the days went steadily by, and the relations of our little party to each other became still more complicated. Anne had dropped almost away from us, while, without apparent cause, Teddy was growing dull and talked gloomily of the outlook, which a short time before had been, in his eyes, so full of promise. At last, being thoroughly disquieted and not a little vexed, I confronted the boy myself with my perplexity, and flatly asked him what was wrong. But I have found, from various painful experiences, that people who indulge in the luxury of plain speaking usually get their trouble for their pains, and this occasion proved to be no exception. Teddy, holding his head very high, informed me that I was making mountains out of mole-hills, and, in a general way, sent me to the right-about with no reserve to fall back on;—for I knew that Mr. Stanfield could not be counted on in an emergency which I believed to be entirely the result of wounded feelings. I decided that Teddy's pride had been hurt by Anne's demeanor, that his heart was sore from Tatters's defection, and I was forced to the belief that, on the whole, the approaching break-up of our little party might be the best, if not the only, solution of the difficulty.

But on the very day when I arrived at this philosophic conclusion, vexation got the better of me and I unwittingly precipitated a most unforeseen climax.

We were all on the beach together, just at sunset, idly chatting, when Anne rose and, as usual of late, called Tatters to follow her. A queer light came into Teddy's blue eyes, and I heard a new tone in his voice as he said, very quietly:

"Tatters, lie still."

The dog stood for a moment, a quite pitiful picture of indecision, and then started in response to Anne's little silver whistle, only to be silently caught by Teddy's ready hand, which held him in a grasp that seemed to me unnecessarily heavy. Anne walked on for a few steps, unconscious, and then, missing the little rush with which Tatters always followed her, turned, to see him securely held by his master, whose face, with a curious set look on it, was turned seaward.

Anne stopped short, and for a moment my heart was in my mouth, for the defiance was too open to be mistaken. But scenes were not in her line, and with one look at the rebellious pair she resumed her quick walk and was out of sight in the gathering twilight before her father had missed her. Fortunately Mr. Stanfield had not noticed the brief side-play, and the tremendous sigh with which Teddy gathered himself together and rose from the sand only attracted his attention so far as to make him say that it was high time we three were at home.

As we left Teddy at his gate in the moonlight the boy's face was sadder than I had ever seen it, and when we met Anne at the gate of the hotel it was something more than malice that prompted me to say suddenly:

"Oh, Anne, what if it is all to be of no good, and that boy isn't going to get well after all?"

To my amazement, and at the same time to my enlightenment, Anne turned as white as Teddy, and caught her father's arm as he stood beside her.

"Papa, is he worse? Why does Miss Leigh say that he is not going to get well?"

"No, no, child," said Mr. Stanfield; "Teddy's all right—sound as a brick. The doctor says he can go North in a week or two. It is Miss Leigh who is used up. She must see the doctor herself, for it isn't like her to be getting nervous about nothing. Come, Anne, you look as if bed would be the best

CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF



CHRISTMAS EVE ON A LOUISIANA PLANTATION



A PLANTATION.—DRAWN BY B. WEST CLINEDINST.

CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF

place for you, too. "Good-night" and we separated, I to my own thoughts, Mr. Stanfield to the quiet night of an unsuspicious man, and Anne—well, only the next morning told how Anne's night had been spent.

Now if ever father had a daughter upon whose common sense he felt that he could implicitly rely, that father was Mr. Stanfield, and the shock which awaited him at his next interview with Anne has probably never been realized in its full intensity by anybody but himself. Naturally, I should never have known the details had he not later wickedly divulged them, but as Anne still stoutly maintains that never in her life did she do anything that she was less ashamed of, there is, I suppose, no reason why I should keep the secret.

Just after breakfast on the morning of this eventful day Anne sent for her father to join her in the sitting-room. "On business," the little note said, and as there was nothing unusual in this, Mr. Stanfield was quite unprepared for the very unusual agitation of his daughter's manner.

"Sit down, papa, please; I want to talk to you for a few minutes. In fact, papa, I have a very great favor to ask of you."

Papa's eyes opened, for, to tell the truth, he was not often put in this position, but, being a man of few words, he said nothing, and after a moment Anne went on with an undeniable shake in her voice.

"Papa, I want you to buy Tatters for me."

"Buy Tatters, Anne? What the deuce have you got into your head, my girl? Why, Teddy would not sell the little brute for a thousand dollars!"

"Offer him two thousand, then, papa," said Anne, trying hard to speak as if it were all a matter of course. "I have plenty of money just now, you know, for I have hardly spent anything this winter. You know, too, that Mr. Archibald is poor and needs the money. If he will sell Tatters to me, he can be quite at ease until he has time to recover and is able once more to help himself. It seems to me a very reasonable arrangement, papa."

But "papa" failed to see the reasonableness of it, and there was some impatience in the tone with which he ejaculated:

"Nonsense, Anne. You forget how those two have been together, how Teddy loves the dog—besides, the boy's not a beggar. Well, I can only say that I don't understand you, Anne."

"Never mind understanding me, dear, only do what I ask. Go and buy Tatters for me, please; you know you can do it if you try." But Anne's laugh was too forced to give much encouragement to her father, and his patience fairly gave way.

"It is a ridiculous errand, Anne, and I will have nothing to do with it. Why, you might as well try to buy Teddy himself."

And then the girl gathered up all her courage and walked straight to where her father stood. She took his two hands in hers, and there were big tears in her eyes, though her voice was clear enough, as she said:

"Papa, dear, don't you see, that is just it. I want to buy Tatters and Teddy both. You must help me, papa, for it is all right—I know he loves me truly, just as you would like him to love me, but, you know, he will never tell me so. He is afraid of the money, and—and—that he isn't going to get well—"

The tears came in earnest now, and her astonished father could only smooth the curly brown hair, and listen for the whispered question:

"Would you be satisfied, papa, with Teddy? He almost belongs to you now, you know."

And somehow, between them, it was settled that papa would be satisfied, and he undertook the somewhat startling commission which he had received with a mixture of amusement and trepidation which made him conscious that, in the interests of all concerned, he must get it over as soon as possible.

An hour later he walked into Teddy's studio, a good deal graver than was his wont, and with a sort of reserve in his manner which was quickly felt by the young man, who was standing before a sketch, which at his guest's entrance he quickly turned to the wall.

"Good-morning, Archibald; how are you? Packing up already? Why, you're not going till next week, surely?"

Teddy's answer was buried in a big packing-box, into which he was attempting to squeeze a last armful of traps, and Mr. Stanfield, whose courage was rapidly making its farewells, took the bull by the horns by picking up Tatters, who was soberly surveying the situation, and asking with as much nonchalance as he could command:

"By the way, Teddy, what are you going to do with this little chap? You can't have him knocking about with you always, you know. Why not turn him over to Anne and me? You know what a fancy the girl has taken to him. I really think she would be glad to buy him from you—in fact—you know what girls are—she said this morning she would be glad to give any price you chose to ask for him. All nonsense, I told her, for I don't suppose you will listen to it"—somewhat weakly concluded Anne's emissary.

Teddy was white to the lips as he echoed Mr. Stanfield's words:

"Sell Tatters! Doesn't she know me better than that?"

Poor Mr. Stanfield! What a morning that was for him, between those two young things, and what an effort it cost for him to answer Teddy's pale face.

"Come, now, don't be offended, my boy; the girl's heart is set on it, and the money will help you. It would be a fair bargain, you know."

Teddy shook his head and walked to the other end of the room, very rudely turning his back on Mr. Stanfield, who found his task even more unpleasant than he had expected. He waited a moment and then walked up to the young fellow and laid a kind hand upon his shoulder.

"See here, Teddy; be reasonable, now. Anne does not mean to be unkind; in fact—she means—but here he was obliged to call a halt. Anne's meaning, whatever it might be, must evidently be left for Teddy to find out for himself, and Mr. Stanfield had reached his limit.

"I am seriously vexed, Archibald," he said, in the sternest tones he knew how to use, "and I insist upon it that I will not be made a cat's-paw of any longer. Go up and see Anne and settle it with her yourself."

Teddy shook his head and set his teeth, and I think the aggravated parent may be forgiven for his final argument and the faint of kicking Tatters which accompanied it.

"Confound the little beast! I can't understand what you all see in him. He seems to me pretty much like any other dog. But I give you fair warning, Archibald, the girl will be down herself after him if you don't take him to her. A spoiled child she is and no mistake."

He did not wait for the result of this last shot, and there were no farewells wasted between him and the implacable young man, but he had the satisfaction, later on in the day, as he was smoking his afternoon cigar on the hotel piazza, of seeing Teddy, with Tatters at his heels, ushered up-stairs to "Miss Stanfield's sitting-room."

I don't believe that Teddy ever looked so handsome in his life as he did that afternoon when the door was opened for him into the soft, scented darkness of Anne's room, where she sat at her writing-table, alone and very still.

"Hard lines this," he said to himself, as the composed little woman rose to meet him, but his blood was up, and I don't doubt that it was in his very best manner that he said:

"Your father asked me, Miss Stanfield, to call on you on a matter of business. I am quite at your service, if I can do anything for you."

Anne, also, was no coward, and the abruptness of the attack pleased her well.

"Thank you, Mr. Archibald," she replied; "it was very good of papa to break the ice for me, so that there might be no need of preliminaries. He told you, I suppose, that I should like to buy Tatters! If you would be so kind as to mention a price, we might perhaps come to terms, and I am sure you know that Tatters will be no loser by the exchange of owners!"

But Teddy was, after all, only just beyond the borders of invalidism, and, as events proved, had overestimated his capacity

for endurance. Something in the girl's voice and her dainty feminine surroundings brought back to him, in a quick flash of association, the days when he was neither unloved nor alone, and he dropped on to Anne's big sofa as if a bullet had gone through him. He did not speak for a moment, and then the words came slowly as if each one cost him something.

"No; Tatters will lose nothing—indeed in most people's eyes he will be the gainer; but have you thought, Miss Stanfield, what I shall lose? Do you know what Tatters, my one friend, has been to me through all these years of sorrow and illness? No; it is impossible, you cannot know—you to whom life has been so fair and pleasant. I ought not to be angry with you, but can't you understand that I would as soon sell myself?"

And I think it was small shame to Teddy that his head went down on his two big brown hands, while a suspicious shake of his broad shoulders struck straight to Anne's heart.

Tatters, luxuriously reposing on the cushions beside his master, pricked up his ears. Anne's only answer was a soft whistle and a beckoning hand. In an instant Tatters the faithless, Tatters the wise, was in her arms. She swallowed something in her throat, and then, soundlessly, steadily, crossed the room to the side of the man whom she had so bravely chosen, for whose sake she was risking so much.

"See, Teddy," she whispered; "Tatters has come to me of his own free will, and, oh, Teddy, look! Tatters and I have come to you."

The handsome head was lifted and Teddy looked, to see close beside him the face of the girl whom he loved better than anything on earth, while on his cheek the soft touch of Tatters's little cold nose told its own story.

After this it is understood that the interview was no longer conducted strictly on business principles, but as Mr. and Mrs. Archibald are the happiest couple I know, and Tatters's portrait is one of their most valued possessions, I suppose that Anne's claim that her first investment is her best may be considered proven.

Certainly nobody disputes that Teddy Archibald is a lucky man.

welcome us? The pilgrims were all about us—the maimed, the halt, and the blind; they come and come.

I cannot think steadily, as does my husband over there by the window. Would I hear the river flowing steadily outside if they had blocked its natural way, piling up barrier on barrier and leaving no outlet—not one small outlet—for relief? Let me forget all this and think but of my sister, to whom I gave a mother's, a father's portion of love till she missed neither. She was my world, as I was hers, yet she has gone for whom I ventured all—and my husband's face alone is left, outlined there on the glass, thinking.

It is not that he is unkind; never that. He was far too kind to-day when the black-rimmed letter came, as we had come, floating down the river—up the long pier—over the green marshes to his hands. He let me break my fast before the crushing news was told to me. He hid the black-rimmed paper in his napkin, where it crouched like a viper waiting to sting. I thought him grave and I grew gayer over my chocolate and my roll.

I choke, remembering it. Suppose they choked the river to its last outlet, what would the end be?

He should have told me that my sister was dead, and then he should have left me. Why did he follow me to the church? How strange it was there, with the hush of another world. Above the misty candles and the white and white with green leaves,

altar rise the radiant lilies; blue lilies, lifted in prayer to Heaven. The priest's voice breathed above us and the choir broke out as an answering cry.

Did I smile in pity yesterday at those weeping pilgrims pleading for healing? To-day I was of them. Was there a twisted limb, a tortured body more wrung and aching than my heart? High over the heads of the people rose the healing relic to which they pressed. Nearer, nearer they thronged, and the priest's arms yet rose, drawing me—drawing me to his feet.

Did I cry aloud—"I, even I also, my Father"? I do not know.

I saw the gracious arms lowered, the healing relic, sacred to a thousand lips, moved to meet my own—my barriers faltered. I leaped to seek the outlet. I awoke.

Need you have claimed me that moment, you Protestant traditions?

Need you have caught me back shuddering, hurrying me

BY MARGARET SUTTON BRISCOE.



In a room with a window looking on the river are a man and a woman. The man stands close by the window, his face outlined against the glass.

The woman lies prostrate on a couch, watching him.

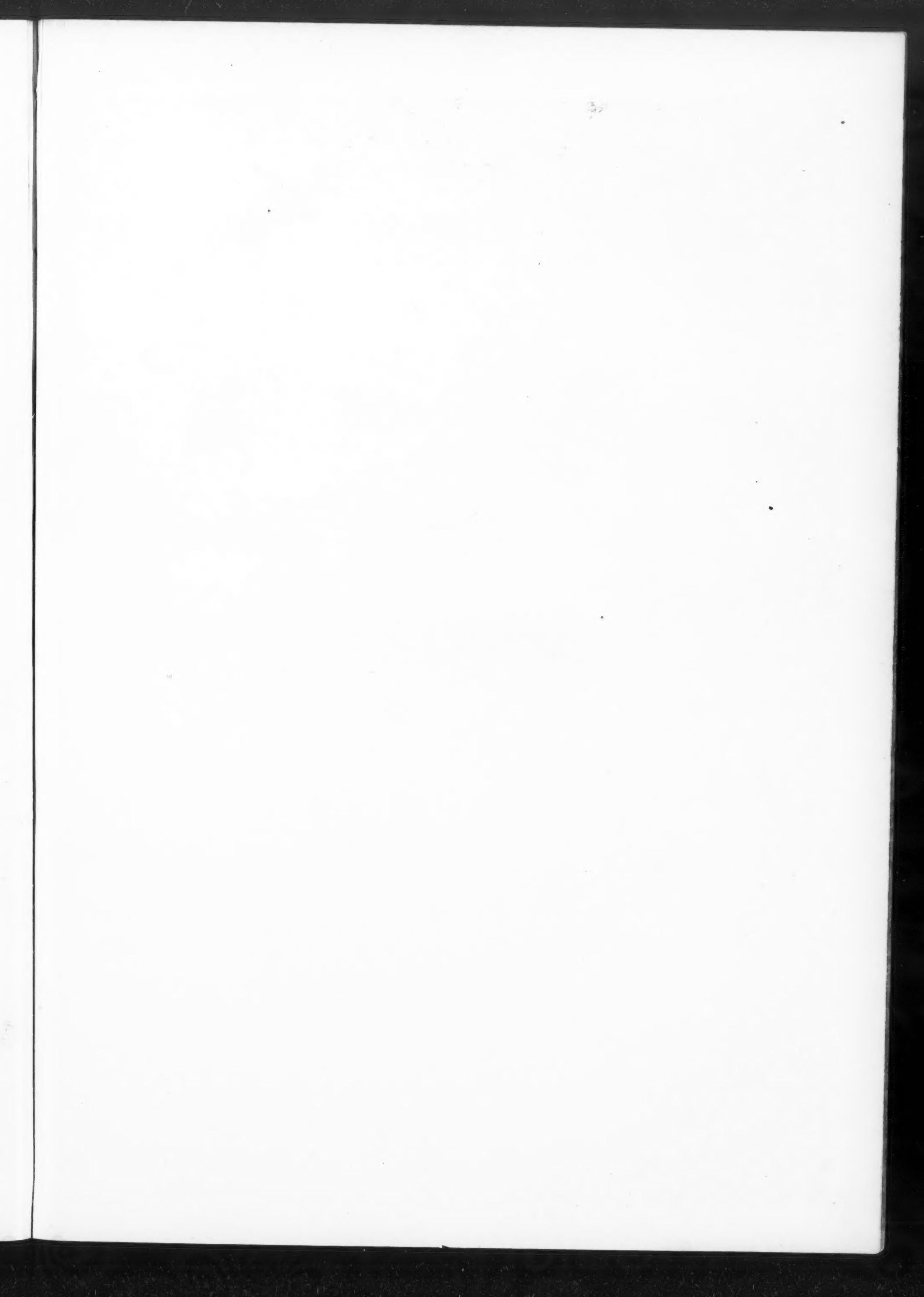
These are her thoughts:

He has lifted me from the floor at his feet where I fell, not groveling but spent. "I must think," is all that he has said.

I lie on my cushioned couch, weary to utter weakness, and watch his face outlined against the window glass—thinking. Can he think steadily, I wonder, or does his brain crowd with a thousand thoughts, as mine is seething?

Beyond my husband's face, through the glass, I can see the blue sky of Beaupré and the spires of Saint Anne the Blessed. That sound outside is the great Canada river flowing strongly between the sloping meadows.

Did I come here a year, or a few days, ago, a wife of one week; floating idly down the river to the long pier stretching far out over the green marsh-grasses and into the water to





WILLIAM F. KLINE

"And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary;

THE ANNUNCIATION



not, Mary : for thou hast found favor with God."

LESLIE'S WEEKLY.

from the multitude who believed and were saved by what might have been my salvation?

Outside in the alcove, behind the red curtains of the confessional, came the sound of a woman's weeping.

If I might have wept!

The curtain parted and the woman hurried by me. If I might have wept also from these suffering eyes!

The confessional opened. Did he wait to draw my tears, the kind priest with the gentle eyes inviting me?

I swayed toward him.

It was my husband that withheld me. Why did he not let me be?

Was it better that he should hear my confession, better that the resistless flood should break into his ears, his life, carrying havoc and destruction?

Now that I have poured out all my secret at his feet, where its force in the end flung me, what will he answer when he moves from the window where he stands thinking?

He loved me. He longed for me. He bought me—that is all. He could not discover the flaw in the title deeds. I would not proclaim it. Love is no lawyer, and he really loved me.

But now he knows the flaw, for I have told him of those dream-like days before he came to seek me; of earlier hours when quick friendship leaped into a love unspeakable, unspoken—of wooded rambles when the face beside my own was not the face I see outlined against the glass, thinking.

Ab, let me close my eyes and think also!

Back, back I go to the past. Behind my closed lids I can see a white country lane shooting straight as an arrow between the overhanging banks. White dogwood blossoms meet above my head, and one by my side holds in his hand a spray of blown dogwood.

He is stroking the white blossoms about his finger as he speaks. Their snowy softness delights him. I cavil at the strange defect in each leaf, but he defends it as a deeper beauty.

Do we two care for the dogwood?

The woods breathe perfume, the sunlight drops through the leaves, flecking the road on which we tread.

He smiles as he lays the leaf against my cheek—this left cheek, near the temple, where a tiny brown mole that I have since loved is set.

Our eyes meet. The wings of warm words unspoken brush by me as the moment passes. If in his poverty he had but proud silence to offer me, I was content. As a dream those days were lived. As a vague dream they ended. I woke to a silent parting—to doubts—then to scorching tears. How should a woman gather back the poor, unclaimed love she has given unasked? Let her fold it with jealous care in her breast, hide it as women hide an unfathered child of shame. I dug the grave of my love deep in my heart, that none might know.

But I knew—I and my self-scorn. My unwomaned womanhood accused me.

Over there by the window my husband is thinking of this opened grave I have showed him, yet it was closed when he came to ask for me; when those who had the right to speak urged him upon me.

He could offer everything. "For what, for whom, did I wait," they asked. For whom, indeed?

One in the distance was still silent, yet I knew that the world had smiled upon him. Pride no longer laid its finger on his lips. And my sister—my tender, unprotected flower. Did she say nothing? Every budding grace of girhood cried out to me until I answered. She should be sheltered as I had been exposed—guarded as I had been guardless.

Oh, my one hope! My little future!

Is all in vain that I have ventured for you? Can she be dead?

Is my husband reading my thoughts over there by the window, that his face grows ever more drawn and set against the glass? I cannot read his thoughts through the still mask he is wearing, yet as he has been kind, I would have him understand. Not for my own ends solely have I married him. For his sake too, I consented. Who was I to weave my life longer? I had twisted and broken the delicate fibres. If the wrecked web was what he wanted, why refuse it to him? These were my bridesmaid thoughts that led me to marriage, to my wedding day, to that strange scene an hour before my marriage of which my husband now knows also; for I have told him everything.

As if the glass where he stands were the old-time mirror in the room of my girlhood, I can see the scene repeated. There it is, the mirror of my girl-days that reflected so often for me in dreamy depths beyond my face, the dogwood lane. Again I seem to stand before its frame, a girl for the last time, and I feel that same swift pain as my quick glance catches a vision forming within, and I tear my eyes away. My sister is lacing my wedding bodice. I feel her dear, excited fingers tremble at my waist, as she says that she will tell me something—something just discovered. I smile at her in the glass as I listen. Her sweet cheek lies against my own—what is it that she whispers?

Is this my own dead face I see next her living, loving features? Does she tell me he came—came—and has gone?

On the very day that I had yielded he came to seek me and they saw him—those that had the right. What he then said and what they answered, I may never know. Too late he came—too late!

My sister's hands embraced my waist, supporting me—her frightened face recalled me.

"It is nothing," I cried, "beloved—nothing. Lace my bodice for me." Yes, they laced me tightly in lest I should breathe and break away.

What I had promised I performed.

And my husband was kind.

When, a wife of one week, we left the little boat on the river and walked up the long pier bridging the soft marsh-grasses, to lose ourselves in the old French town between the river and the high rocks, I think I was almost contented in his kindness. At least his care lulled me to rest. Across my past I dropped the curtain of my will and placed him in my present.

To-day with the black-rimmed letter came a shock and tumult that rent the vail of the temple.

He has seen my relic, buried in the shrine of my heart. And so I lie here awaiting his decision, yet knowing what it must

be. When he has sent me back to the old life, how shall I bear it without you, my sister?

I shall face the anger of those who have the right to reprove, with one question: "You who had the right to carry, and who carried stones for the barrier, what would have happened had you so blocked that strong flowing river outside, on its natural way?"

My husband over there by the window knows what happens when the last outlet is shut off and the barrier trembles and breaks. He knows everything that the sweeping flood can teach. In my sorrow I cried out for the lightest touch of a hand not his. I suffered for the sound of another voice until I could have died to hear it speaking near me, if but for one moment, with one word of comfort.

All this my husband knows; for I have told him—told him with my own lips, exulting in the rushing, unspent speech. And now I have only to lie here waiting while he stands with his face outlined against the window glass, thinking.

The man at the window turns and draws near the couch.

He bends over the woman and speaks slowly in a low voice—pauses and speaks again.

As he ceases, awaiting her reply, these are her thoughts:

It is over. He has turned at last and spoken. For his cold justice, his repudiation, I was prepared. This strikes me as a blow. Has my husband asked of me my forgiveness, my patience, my help, as he offers his, or do I dream?

The strength wherewith I was braced to meet his sentence slips from me useless.

I am fettered by weakness that drags my very eyelids down.

Behind my closed lids I see a white country lane shooting straight as an arrow between the overhanging banks. White dogwood blossoms meet above my head, and by my side is one into whose face I gaze—indifferently.

I wander on through all those happy lanes of my loved past.

Their charm is dead to me, and gone—I know forever.

Perhaps it is that I have died.

Yet no. I can lift my eyes and see, through yonder window, the blue sky of Beaupré and the spires of Saint Anne the Blessed.

Am I a pilgrim here?

Is this my miracle?

What has my husband done, what said, that, as he spoke, wiped my past from the slate as a problem finished?

I feel his kind hand's touch.

His kind voice speaks to me.

I cannot answer yet. Outside I hear the pilgrim river flowing strongly between the kind, confining meadows to the church where are the shrine and the healing relic.

Have I, too, found my boundaries, where I may flow gently?

Am I too a pilgrim?

Have I kissed the relic, or my husband's hand?

He is bending nearer.

Life stirs faintly in my heart, yet strengthens with each breath.

Oh, river, flowing strongly there without, teach me to answer him!



MORNING.



EVENING.

"Hail, Mary: Blessed Art Thou Among Women."

Thou art high in the fathomless splendor that knoweth no sun or star,
Thou, human, yet higher than angels, where the mightiest angels are;
And hast thou forgotten, O Mary, in that ageless glory of thine,
The rising and setting of suns in the heavens of Palestine?

Thou art crowned as a Mother in heaven—but low at the feet of the Son
Canst thou look back and remember the life of the years that are done?
Thou art woman, not angel, O Mary! and safe in the folds of thine
heart
I ween that thou still keepest all things to ponder, as high as thou art.

Through the sweep of the song that forever and ever ascends round the
throne
Canst thou catch, O dear Mother, the echo of prayers once thine own?
The whispers that rose on the darkness when moonlight was dying in
dawn,
And outward and upward thy soul like the breath of a flower was
drawn!

The nine ranks of seraphs bend round thee, the angels encircle thy place;
Down the measureless legions of heaven thou knowest each rapturous
face;
But deep in thy heart unforgotten the sunshine of Nazareth lies,
And the shadows of old human faces float up in thine eyes.

They tread the rough hill-path beside thee at evening again,
When the last flame of sunset is smouldering, burned down to the edge
of the plain;
The girls lean and laugh at the well-side—thou a girl with the rest,
The mystery of God round about thee, His love in thy breast.

Thou keepest the sound of their voices, the touch of their hands;
Thy feet know the dews of the rock-clefts, the heat of the sands,
While ever and always, O Mary, thy soul in a rapturous pain
Broods over the Bethlehem stable, adoring again.

Thy lips keep the touch of old kisses, and kindling as fire
The lips of the Babe as they turned to the mother's desire;
Thine ears hold the mystery and wonder, His first trembling word,
Who lay on thine heart and looked upward, thy God
and thy Lord.

Thou hast not forgotten one heart-beat—thou, whose
sorrows were seven—
Thou, Mother and maiden forever, crowned
Mother in heaven!
We hail thee with Gabriel, we bless thee,
where low at the feet of the Son
Thou kneelst, wrapped round with His
radiance, O humble and
glorified one!

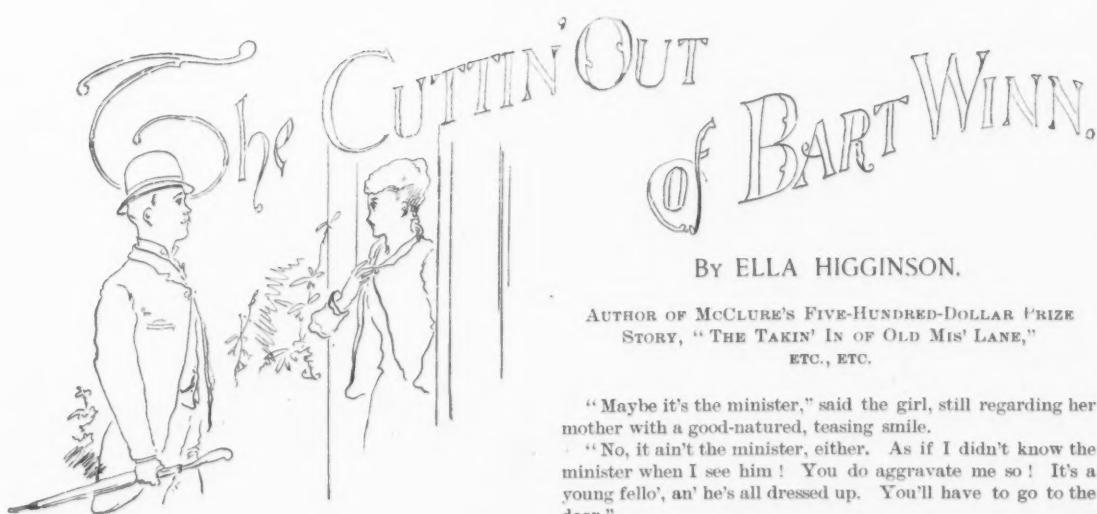
G. A. DAVIS.

"Deep in thy heart the sunshine of Nazareth lies."





"Faster and faster worked the powerful arms, and louder and louder the guttural chant beat time."



BY ELLA HIGGINSON.

AUTHOR OF MCCLURE'S FIVE-HUNDRED-DOLLAR PRIZE STORY, "THE TAKIN' IN OF OLD MIS' LANE,"
ETC., ETC.

"Maybe it's the minister," said the girl, still regarding her mother with a good-natured, teasing smile.

"No, it ain't the minister, either. As if I didn't know the minister when I see him! You do aggravate me so! It's a young fello', an' he's all dressed up. You'll have to go to the door."

"Oh, maw!" cried Lavinia, reproachfully. "I just can't—in this short dress!"

She stood up, with a look of dismay, and began pulling nervously at her fresh gingham skirt. It was short, showing very prettily-arched insteps and delicate ankles.

"Well, you just can, an' haf to," said Mrs. Vaiden, shortly. "I've told you often enough to put a ruffle on the bottom o' that dress, an' I'm glad you're caught. Mebbe you'll do 's I tell you after this—"

She started guiltily as a loud rap sounded upon the door behind her, and began to tiptoe heavily down the hall toward the kitchen. The girl looked after her in mingled amusement and chagrin. Then she leaned forward slightly, drawing her skirt back closely on both sides, and looked at her feet, with her head turned on one side like a bird. When the cessation o' her mother's labored breathing announced silently that she

had reached the kitchen in safety, Lavinia shrugged her beautiful shoulders—which no gown could conceal—and opened the door. A young man in a light traveling-suit stood before her. In his hand was a bunch of her own sweet-peas.

At sight of her he whisked off his hat in a way that brought a lovely color to her face and throat. For a little while it seemed as if he was not going to say or do anything but just look at her. She was well worth looking at. She had the rare beauty of velvet eyes of a reddish-brown color, hair wavy and brown, with red glints in it, and a clear complexion, unfreckled and of exquisite coloring.

Lavinia's eyes went to the sweet-peas, and then, with a deeper blush under them, to his face.

"Won't you come in?" she said.

"Why, yes, if you'll let me." The young man smiled, and Lavinia found her lips and eyes responding, in all the lightness of youth and a clear conscience.

"I couldn't help taking some of your sweet-peas," he said, following her into the parlor. It was a large, solemn-looking room. The blinds were lowered over the windows, but the girl raised one slightly, letting a splash of pale autumnal sunshine flicker across the hit-and-miss rag carpet. There was an organ in one corner and a hair-cloth sofa in another. Eight slender-legged hair-cloth chairs were placed at severely equal distances around the room, their backs resting firmly against the walls. All tipped forward slightly, their front legs being somewhat shorter than the others. On the back of each was a small, square, crocheted tidy. There were some family portraits on the walls, in oval gilt frames; and there was a large picture of George Washington and family, on their stateliest behavior; another, named in large letters "The Journey of Life," of an uncommonly roomy row-boat containing at least a dozen persons, who were supposed to represent all ages from the cradle to the grave; in the wide, white margin beneath this picture were two verses of beautiful, descriptive poetry, and in one corner appeared, with apparent irrelevancy, the name of an illustrated newspaper. There was also a chromo of a scantily-attired woman clinging to a cross which was set in the midst of dashing sea-waves; and there was a cheerful

"LAVIN-EE!"
"Well?"

Mrs. Vaiden came to the foot of the stairs.

"You up there?" she said.

"Yes, maw. What you want?"

"Somebody's comin'," said Mrs. Vaiden, lowering her voice to a tone of important mystery.

"I guess not here," said Lavinia, lightly. She sat down on the top step and smiled at her mother.

"Yes, it is here, too," retorted Mrs. Vaiden, with some irritation. "If you couldn't conterdict a body 't wouldn't be you! You're just like your paw!" She paused, and then added: "It's a man a-foot. He's comin' up the path slow, a-stoppin' to look at the flowers."

CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF

photograph, in a black cloth frame, of flowers—made into harps crosses, anchors and hearts—that had been sent at some time of bereavement by sympathetic but misguided friends. A marble-topped centre-table held a large plush album, a scrap-book, a book of autographs, a lamp with a pale-green shade, and a glass case containing a feather-wreath.

"Oh, we've got lots of sweet-peas," said Lavinia, adjusting the blind carefully. Then she looked at him.

"May I see Mrs. Vaiden?" he asked, easily.

"She's—busy," said Lavinia, with a look of embarrassment. "But I'll see—"

"Oh, don't," interrupted the young man lightly. "They told me at the post-office she took boarders sometimes, and I came to see if there was any chance for me." He handed a card to the girl with an air of not knowing that he was doing it. Her very eyelids seemed to blush as she looked at it and read the name—Mr. C. Daun Diller. "I am writing up the Puget Sound country for a New York paper, and I should like to make my headquarters here at Whatcom, but I can't stand the hotels in your new towns. It's the most amazing thing!" he went on, smiling at her as she stood twisting the card in her fingers, not knowing exactly what to do with it. "You go to sleep at night in a Puget Sound village with the fronts of the stores painted green, blue and red, spasmodic patches of sidewalk here and there, dust ankle deep, and no street-lights—and you wake in the morning in a city! A city with fine stone blocks and residences, stone pavements, electric lights, and rail-ways, gas, splendid water-works,"—he was checking off now, excitedly, on his fingers,—"sewerage, big mills, factories, canneries, public schools that would make the East stare, churches, libraries"—he stopped abruptly, and, dropping his arms simply to his sides, added—"and not a hotel! Not a comfortable bed or good meal to be had for love or money!"

"Yes, that's so," said Lavinia, reluctantly. "But you can't expect us to get everythin' all at oncet. Why, Whatcom's boom only started in about six months ago."

Mr. C. Daun Diller looked amused. "Oh, if it were this town only," he said, sitting down on one of the hair-cloth chairs and feeling himself slide gently forward, "I shouldn't have mentioned it. But the truth is, there are only three decent hotels in the whole Puget Sound country. But I know"—here he smiled at her again—"that it's not safe to breathe a word against Puget Sound to a Puget-Sounder."

"No, it ain't," said the girl, responding to the smile and the respectfully bantering tone. Then she moved to the door. "Well, I'll see what maw says to it," she said, and vanished.

Mr. C. Daun Diller stood up and pushed his hands down into his pockets, whistling softly. He walked over to the organ and looked at the music. There were three large books: "The Home Circle," "The Golden Chord," and "The Family Treasury"; a "simplified" copy of "The Maiden's Prayer," and a book of "Gospel Songs."

The young man smiled.

"All the same," he said, as if in answer to a disparaging remark made by some one else, "she's about the handsomest girl I ever saw. I'm gettin' right-down anxious to see myself what 'maw' will 'say to it.'"

After a long while Mrs. Vaiden appeared in a crisply-starched gingham dress and a company manner—both of which had been freshly put on for the occasion. Mr. Diller found her rather painfully polite, and he began to wonder, after paying his first week's board, whether he could endure two or three months of her; but he was quite, quite sure that he could endure a full year of the daughter.

A couple of evenings later he was sitting by the window in his quaint but exquisitely neat room, writing, when a light rap came upon his door. Upon opening it he found Lavinia standing, bashfully, a few steps away. There was a picturesque, broad-brimmed hat set coquettishly on her splendid hair.

"Maw wanted I sh'd ask you if you'd like to see an Indian canoe-race," she said.

"Would I?" he ejaculated, getting into a great excitement at once. "Well, I should say so! Awfully good of your mother to think—but where is it—when is it? How can I see it?"

"It's down by the viaduct—right now," said Lavinia. Then she added, shyly, pretending to be deeply engrossed with her glove: "I'm just goin'."

"Oh, are you?" said Diller, seizing his hat and stick and coming eagerly out to her. "And may I go with you? Will you take me in hand? I haven't the ghost of an idea where the viaduct is."

"Oh, yes, I'll show you," she said with a glad little laugh, and they went swiftly down the stairs and out into the sweet evening.

"You know," she said, as he opened the gate for her with a deference to which she was not accustomed, and which gave her a thrill of innocent exultation, "the Alaska Indians are just comin' back from hop-pickin' down around Puyallup an' Yakima an' Seattle, an' they alwus stop here an' have races with the Lummies an' the Nooksacks."

Mr. Diller drew a deep breath.

"Do you know," he said, "I wouldn't have missed this for anything—not for anything I can think of. And yet I should if it hadn't been for"—he hesitated, and then added—"your mother." They looked into each other's eyes and laughed, very foolishly and happily.

The sun was setting—moving slowly, scarlet and of dazzling brilliancy, down the western sky, that shaded rapidly from pale blue to salmon, and from salmon to palest pea-green. Beneath, superbly motionless, at full tide, the sound stretched mile on mile away to Lummi peninsula, against whose hills the sun rested—every fir-tree on those noble crests standing out against that burnished background. A broad, unbroken path of gold stretched from shore to shore. Some sea-gulls were circling in endless, silvery rings through the amethystine haze between sea and sky. The old, rotten pier running a mile out to sea shone like a strip of gold above the deep blue water. It was crowded with people, indifferent to danger in their eagerness to see the races. Indeed, there seemed to be people everywhere: on the high banks, the piers, and the mills scattered over the tide-flats, and out in row-boats. Two brass bands

were playing stirring strains alternately. There was much excitement—much shouting, hurrying, running. The crowd kept swaying from the viaduct over to the pier, and from the pier back to the viaduct. Nobody seemed to be quite sure where the start would be; even the three judges, when asked, yelled back, as they clambered down to their row-boat: "We don't know. Wait and see!"

"What accommodating persons," said Mr. Diller, cheerfully. "Shall we go over to the pier? The tide seems to be running that way?"

"Oh, the tide's not running now," said Lavinia. "It's full."

Diller looked amused. "I meant the people," he said.

The girl laughed and looked around on the pushing crowd. "I guess we'd best stop right here on the viaduct; here's just where they started last year an' the year before. Oh, see, here's the Alaskans camped pretty near under us!"

As she lifted her voice a little Diller saw a young man standing near start and turn toward her with a glad look of recognition; but at once his glance rested on Diller, and his expression changed to a kind of puzzled bewilderment. The girl was leaning over the railing and did not see him, but he never took his eyes away from her and Diller.

There was a long wait, but the crowd did not lose its patience or its good humor. There was considerable betting going on, and there was the same exciting uncertainty about the start. The sun went down and a bank of apricot-colored clouds piled low over the snow crest of Mount Baker in the east. The pier darkened and the path of gold faded, but splashes of scarlet still lingered on the blue water. A chill, sweet wind started up suddenly, and some of the girl's bronze curls got loose about her white temples. Diller put her wrap around her carefully, and she smiled up at him deliciously. Then she cried out: "Oh, they're gettin' into the boat! They're goin' to start. Oh, I'm so glad!" and struck her two hands together gleefully, like a child.

The long, narrow, richly-painted and carven canoe slid down gracefully into the water. Eleven tall, supple Alaskan Indians, bare to the waist, leaped lightly to their places. They sat erect, close to the sides of the boat, holding their short paddles perpendicularly. At a signal the paddles shot straight down into the water, and, with a swift, magnificent straining and swelling of muscles in the powerful bronze arms and bodies, were pushed backward and withdrawn in lightning strokes. The canoe flashed under the viaduct and appeared on the other side, and a great shout belched from thousands of throats. From camping-places farther up the shore the other boats darted out into the water and headed for the viaduct.

"Oh, good! good!" cried Lavinia in a very ecstasy of excitement. "They're goin' to start right under us. We're just in the place!"

"Twenty dollars on the Nooksacks!" yelled a bear-eyed man in a carriage. "Twenty! Twenty aginst ten on the Nooksacks!"

The band burst into "Hail, Columbia!" with beautiful irrelevancy. The crowd came surging back from the pier. Diller was excited, too. His face was flushed and he was breathing heavily. "Who'll you bet on?" he asked, laughing, and thinking, even at that moment, how ravishingly lovely she was with that glow on her face and the loose curls blowing about her face and throat.

"Oh, the Alaskas!" cried the girl, striking little blows of impatience on the railing with her soft fists. "They're so tall an' fine-lookin'! They're so strong an' grand! Look at their muscles—just like ropes! Oh, I'll bet on the Alaskas! I love tall men!"

"Do you?" said Diller. "I'm tall."

They looked into each other's eyes again and laughed. Then a voice spoke over their shoulders—a kind, patient voice. "Oh, Laviny," it said; "I wouldn't bet if I was you."

Lavinia gave a little scream. Both turned instantly. The young man who had been watching them stood close to them. He wore working-clothes—a flannel shirt and cheap, faded trousers and coat. He had a good, strong honest face, and there was a tenderness in the look he bent on the girl that struck Diller as being almost pathetic.

The glow in Lavinia's face turned to the scarlet of the sunset.

"Oh!" she said, embarrassed; "that you, Bart? I didn't know you was back."

"I just got back," he replied, briefly. "I got to go back again 'n the mornin'. I was just on my way up to your house. I guess I'll go on. I'm tired, an' I've seen lots o' c'noe races." He looked at her wistfully.

"Well," she said, after a moment's hesitation. "You go on up, then. Maw an' paw's at home, an' I'll come's soon's the race's over."

"All right," he said, with a little drop in his voice, and walked away.

"Oh, dear!" cried Lavinia, "we're missin' the start, ain't we?"

The canoes were lying side by side, waiting for the signal. Every Indian was bent forward, holding his paddle suspended above the water in both hands. There was what might be termed a rigid suppleness in the attitude. The dark outlines of the paddles showed clearly in the water, which had turned yellow as brass. Suddenly the band ceased playing and the signal rang across the sunset. Thirty-three paddles shot into the water, working with the swift regularity of piston-rods in powerful engines. The crowds cheered and yelled. The canoes did not flash or glide now, but literally plowed and plunged through the water, which boiled and seethed behind them in white, bubbled foam that at times hid the bronze figures from sight completely. There was no shouting now, but tense, breathless excitement. People clung, motionless, in dangerous places and stared with straining eyes, under bent brows, after the leaping canoes. The betting had been high. The fierce, rhythmic strokes of the paddles made a noise that was like the rapid pumping of a great ram. To Diller, who stood, pale, with compressed lips, it sounded like the frantic heart-beat of a nation in passionate riot. Mingled with it was a noise that, once heard, cannot be forgotten—strange, guttural chanting on one tone, that yet seemed to hold a windy, musical note; a

sound, regular and rhythmic as the paddle-strokes, that came from deep in the breasts of the rigidly swaying Indians and found utterance through locked teeth.

A mile out a railroad crossed the tide-lands, and this was the turning point. The Nooksacks made it first, closely followed by the Alaskans, and then, amid wild cheering, the three canoes headed for the viaduct. Faster and faster worked those powerful arms; the paddles whizzed more fiercely through the air; the water spurted in white sheets behind; the canoes bounded, length on length, out of the water; and louder and faster the guttural chant beat time. The Alaskans and the Nooksacks were coming in together, carven prow to carven prow, and the excitement was terrific. Nearer and nearer, neither gaining, they came. Then, suddenly, there burst a mad yell of triumph, and the Alaskan boat arose from the water and leaped almost its full length ahead of the Nooksacks; and amidst waving hats and handkerchiefs, and almost frantic cheering—the race was won.

"By the eternal!" said Diller, beginning to breathe again and wiping the perspiration from his brow; "if that isn't worth crossing the plains to see, I don't know what is!" But his companion did not hear. She was alternately waving her kerchief to the victors and pounding her small fists on the railing in an ecstasy of triumph.

* * * * *

"Lavin-ee?"

"Well?"

"You come right down hyeer an' help me em'ty this renchin'-water. I'd like to know what's got into you! A-stayin' up-stairs half your time, an' just a-mopin' around when you are down. You ain't b'en worth your salt lately!"

The girl came into the kitchen slowly. "What you jawin' about now, maw?" she said, smiling.

"I'll show you what I'm a-jawin' about, 's you call it. Take holt o' this tub an' help me em'ty this renchin'-water."

"Well, don't holler so; Mr. Diller'll hear you."

"I don't care if he does hear me. I can give him his come-up-ans if he goes to foolin' around, listenin'. I don't care if he does write for a paper 'n New York! You've got to take holt o' the work more'n you've b'en lately. A-traipsin' around all over the country with him, a-showin' him things to write about an'make fun of! I sh'd think Bart Winn had just about got enough of it."

"I wish you'd keep still about Bart Winn," said Lavinia, impatiently.

"Well, I ain't a-goin' to keep still about him." Mrs. Vaiden poured the dish-water into the sink and passed the dish-cloth round and round the pan, inside and outside, with mechanical care, before she opened the back door and hung it out on the side of the house. "I guess I don't haft to ask you when I want to talk. There you was—gone all day yester'day a-huntin' star-fish, an' that renchin'-water a-settin' there a-ruinin' that tub because I couldn't em'ty it all by myself. Just 's if he never saw star-fish where he come from. An' then to-day—b'en gone all the mornin' a-ketchin' crabs! How many crabs'd you ketch, I'd like to know!"

"We didn't ketch many," said Lavinia, with a soft, aggravating laugh.

"No, I guess the water wa'n't clear enough to see 'em!" The rinsing-water had been emptied, and Mrs. Vaiden was industriously wiping the tub. "I've got all the star-fishin' an' the crab-ketchin' I want, an' I'm a-goin' to tell that young man that he can go some'rs else for his board. He's b'en here a month, an' he's just about made a fool o' you. Pret' soon you'll be a-thinkin' you're too good for Bart Winn!"

"Oh, no," said Bart Winn's honest voice in the doorway; "I guess Lavin won't never be a-thinkin' that."

"Mercy!" cried Mrs. Vaiden, starting and coloring guiltily; "that you? How you scairt me! I'm all of a-trimble."

Bart advanced to Lavinia and kissed her with much tenderness; but instead of blushing, she paled.

"When'd you come?" she asked, briefly, drawing away, while her mother, muttering something about the sour cream and the spring-house, went out discreetly.

"This mornin'," said Bart. "I'm a-goin' to stay home now."

The girl sat down, taking a pan of potatoes on her lap. "I wonder where the case-knife is," she said, helplessly.

"I'll get it," said Bart, running into the pantry and returning with the knife. "I love to wait on you, Laviny," he added, with shining eyes. "I guess I'll get to wait on you a sight, now. I see your paw's I come up an' he said's how I could board hyeer. I'll do the chores for you—an' glad to. An', oh, Laviny! I most forgot. I spoke for a buggy's I come up, so I can take you a-ridin' to-night."

"I guess I can't go," said Lavinia, holding her head down and paring potatoes as if her life depended upon getting the skins off.

"You can't! Why can't you?"

"I—why, I'm goin' a salmon-spearin' up at Squalicum Creek, I guess. Salmon's a-runnin' like everythin' now. Most half the town goes up there soon 's it gets dark."

"That a fact?" said Bart, shifting from one foot to the other and looking interested. "I want to know. Well"—his face brightened—"I'll go down an' tell 'em I'll take the rig to morro' night. I see your paw's I come up an' he said's how I could board hyeer. I'll do the chores for you—an' glad to. An', oh, Laviny! I most forgot. I spoke for a buggy's I come up, so I can take you a-ridin' to-night."

"Yes." A pulse began thumping violently in the girl's throat. Her eyelids got so heavy she could not lift them. "I guess—that is, I—why you see, Bart, I got comp'ny."

"Well, I guess the girls won't object to my goin' along o' you."

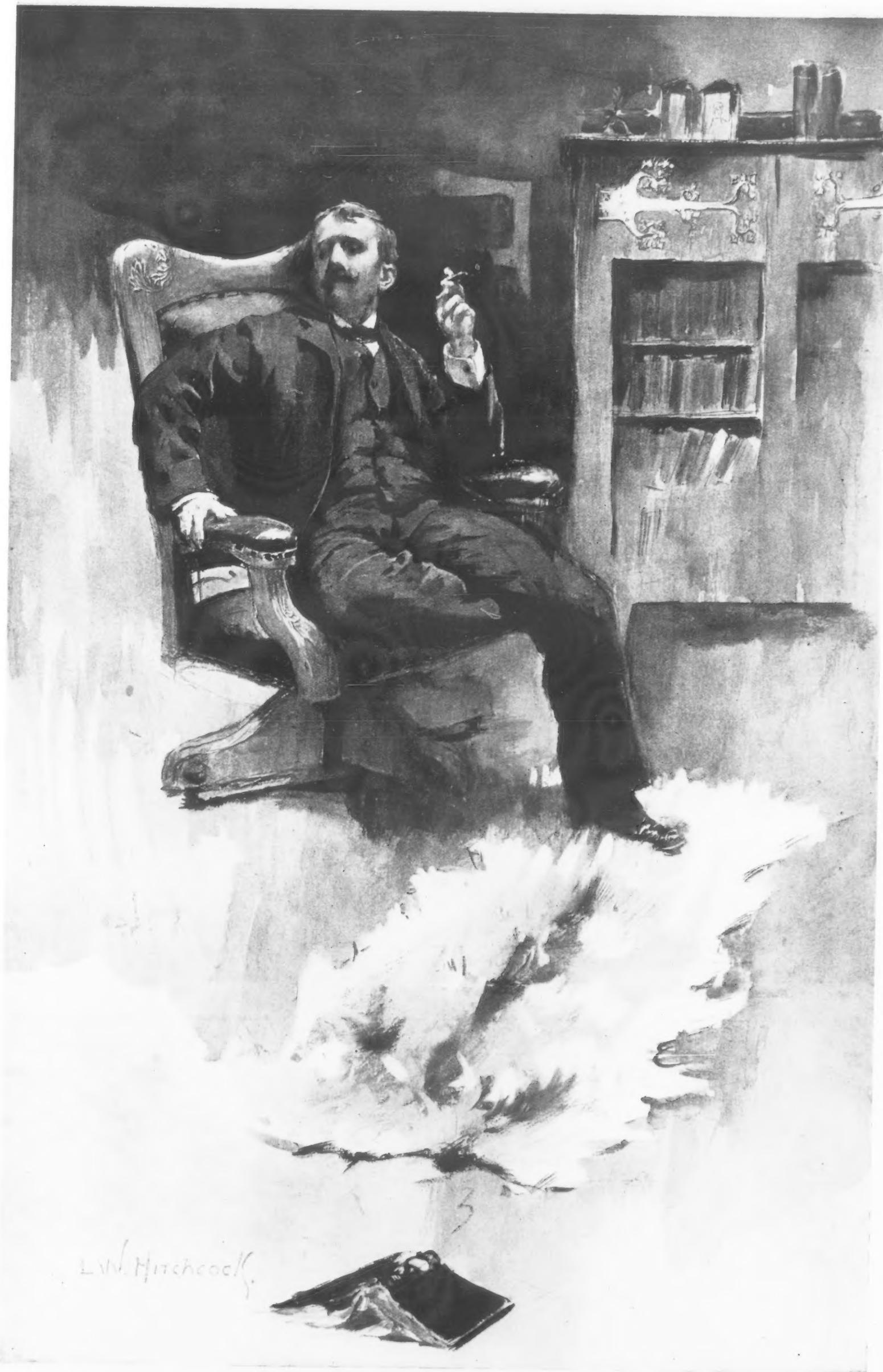
"It ain't girls," said Lavinia, desperately. "It's—a—it's Mr. Diller; the gentleman that boards here."

"Oh," said Bart, slowly. Then there was a most trying silence, during which the ticking of the clock and the beating of her own heart were the only sounds Lavinia heard. At last she said, feebly: "You see he writes for a New York newspaper—one o' the big ones. He's a-writin' up the whole Puget Sound country. An' he don't know just what he'd ort to see, nor just how to see it, unless somebody shows him about—an' I've b'en a-showin' him."

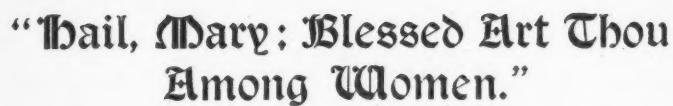
"Oh!" said Bart again, but quite in another tone, quite



THE LOOK BEYOND.
DRAWN BY MISS G. A. DAVIS.



THE BACHELOR'S CHRISTMAS REVERIE.—DRAWN BY L. W. HITCHCOCK.



"Hail, Mary: Blessed Art Thou Among Women."

Thou art high in the fathomless splendor that knoweth no sun or star,
Thou, human, yet higher than angels, where the mightiest angels are;
And hast thou forgotten, O Mary, in that ageless glory of thine,
The rising and setting o' suns in the heavens of Palestine?

Thou art crowned as a Mother in heaven—but low at the feet of the Son
Canst thou look back and remember the life of the years that are done?
Thou art woman, not angel, O Mary! and safe in the folds of thine
heart
I ween that thou still keepest all things to ponder, as high as thou art.

Through the sweep of the song that forever and ever ascends round the
throne
Canst thou catch, O dear Mother, the echo of prayers once thine own?
The whispers that rose on the darkness when moonlight was dying in
dawn,
And outward and upward thy soul like the breath of a flower was
drawn?

The nine ranks of seraphs bend round thee, the angels encircle thy place;
Down the measureless legions of heaven thou knowest each rapturous
face;
But deep in thy heart unforgotten the sunshine of Nazareth lies,
And the shadows of old human faces float up in thine eyes.

They tread the rough hill-path beside thee at evening again,
When the last flame of sunset is smouldering, burned down to the edge
of the plain;
The girls lean and laugh at the well-side—thou a girl with the rest,
The mystery of God round about thee, His love in thy breast.

Thou keepest the sound of their voices, the touch of their hands;
Thy feet know the dews of the rock-clefts, the heat of the sands,
While ever and always, O Mary, thy soul in a rapturous pain
Broods over the Bethlehem stable, adoring again.

Thy lips keep the touch of old kisses, and kindling as fire
The lips of the Babe as they turned to the mother's desire;
Thine ears hold the mystery and wonder, His first trem-
bling word,
Who lay on thine heart and looked upward, thy God
and thy Lord.

Thou hast not forgotten one heart-beat—thou, whose
sorrows were seven—
Thou, Mother and maiden forever, crowned
Mother in heaven!

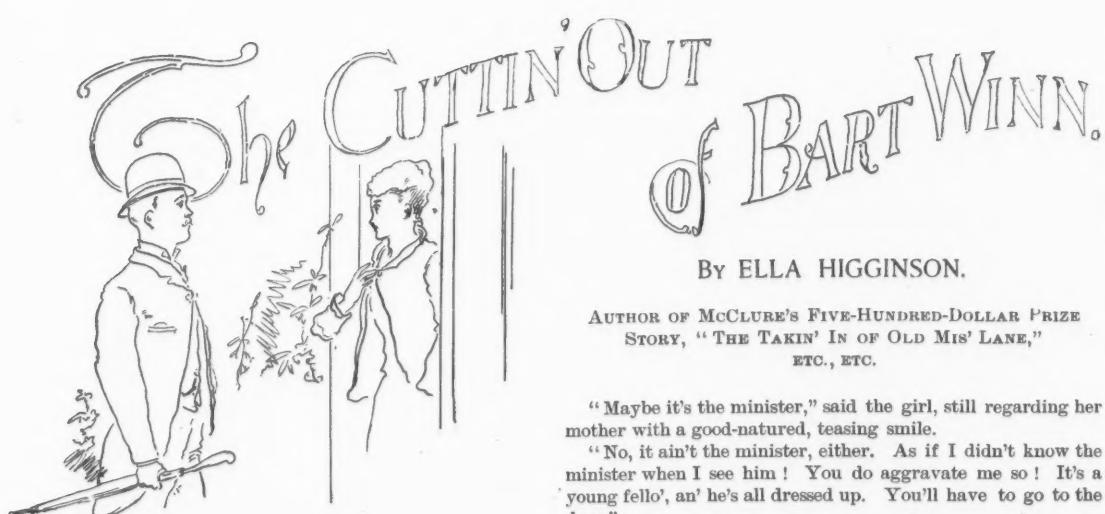
We hail thee with Gabriel, we bless thee,
where low at the feet of the Son
Thou kneelst, wrapped round with His
radiance, O humble and
glorified one!

G. A. DAVIS.

"Deep in thy heart the sunshine of Nazareth lies."



"Faster and faster worked the powerful arms, and louder and louder the guttural chant beat time."



BY ELLA HIGGINSON.

AUTHOR OF MCCLURE'S FIVE-HUNDRED-DOLLAR PRIZE STORY, "THE TAKIN' IN OF OLD MIS' LANE,"
ETC., ETC.

"Maybe it's the minister," said the girl, still regarding her mother with a good-natured, teasing smile.

"No, it ain't the minister, either. As if I didn't know the minister when I see him! You do aggravate me so! It's a young fello', an' he's all dressed up. You'll have to go to the door."

"Oh, maw!" cried Lavinia, reproachfully. "I just can't—in this short dress!"

She stood up, with a look of dismay, and began pulling nervously at her fresh gingham skirt. It was short, showing very prettily-arched insteps and delicate ankles.

"Well, you just can, an' haf to," said Mrs. Vaiden, shortly. "I've told you often enough to put a ruffle on the bottom o' that dress, an' I'm glad you're caught. Mebbe you'll do 's I tell you after this—"

She started guiltily as a loud rap sounded upon the door behind her, and began to tiptoe heavily down the hall toward the kitchen. The girl looked after her in mingled amusement and chagrin. Then she leaned forward slightly, drawing her skirt back closely on both sides, and looked at her feet, with her head turned on one side like a bird. When the cessation o' her mother's labored breathing announced silently that she

had reached the kitchen in safety, Lavinia shrugged her beautiful shoulders—which no gown could conceal—and opened the door. A young man in a light traveling-suit stood before her. In his hand was a bunch of her own sweet-peas.

At sight of her he whisked off his hat in a way that brought a lovely color to her face and throat. For a little while it seemed as if he was not going to say or do anything but just look at her. She was well worth looking at. She had the rare beauty of velvet eyes of a reddish-brown color, hair wavy and brown, with red glints in it, and a clear complexion, un-freckled and of exquisite coloring.

Lavinia's eyes went to the sweet-peas, and then, with a deeper blush under them, to his face.

"Won't you come in?" she said.

"Why, yes, if you'll let me." The young man smiled, and Lavinia found her lips and eyes responding, in all the lightness of youth and a clear conscience.

"I couldn't help taking some of your sweet-peas," he said, following her into the parlor. It was a large, solemn-looking room. The blinds were lowered over the windows, but the girl raised one slightly, letting a splash of pale autumnal sunshine flicker across the hit-and-miss rag carpet. There was an organ in one corner and a hair-cloth sofa in another. Eight slender-legged hair-cloth chairs were placed at severely equal distances around the room, their backs resting firmly against the walls. All tipped forward slightly, their front legs being somewhat shorter than the others. On the back of each was a small, square, crocheted tidy. There were some family portraits on the walls, in oval gilt frames; and there was a large picture of George Washington and family, on their stateliest behavior; another, named in large letters "The Journey of Life," of an uncommonly roomy row-boat containing at least a dozen persons, who were supposed to represent all ages from the cradle to the grave; in the wide, white margin beneath this picture were two verses of beautiful, descriptive poetry, and in one corner appeared, with apparent irrelevancy, the name of an illustrated newspaper. There was also a chromo of a scantily-attired woman clinging to a cross which was set in the midst of dashing sea-waves; and there was a cheerful

"LAVIN-EE!"
"Well?"
Mrs. Vaiden came to the foot of the stairs.

"You up there?" she said.

"Yes, maw. What you want?"

"Somebody's comin'," said Mrs. Vaiden, lowering her voice to a tone of important mystery.

"I guess not here," said Lavinia, lightly. She sat down on the top step and smiled at her mother.

"Yes, it is here, too," retorted Mrs. Vaiden, with some irritation. "If you couldn't conderdict a body 't wouldn't be you! You're just like your paw!" She paused, and then added: "It's a man a-foot. He's comin' up the path slow, a-stoppin' to look at the flowers."

CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF

photograph, in a black cloth frame, of flowers—made into harps crosses, anchors and hearts—that had been sent at some time of bereavement by sympathetic but misguided friends. A marble-topped centre-table held a large plush album, a scrapbook, a book of autographs, a lamp with a pale-green shade, and a glass case containing a feather-wreath.

"Oh, we've got lots of sweet-peas," said Lavinia, adjusting the blind carefully. Then she looked at him.

"May I see Mrs. Vaiden?" he asked, easily.

"She's—busy," said Lavinia, with a look of embarrassment.

"But I'll see—"

"Oh, don't," interrupted the young man lightly. "They told me at the post-office she took boarders sometimes, and I came to see if there was any chance for me." He handed a card to the girl with an air of not knowing that he was doing it. Her very eyelids seemed to blush as she looked at it and read the name—Mr. C. Daun Diller. "I am writing up the Puget Sound country for a New York paper, and I should like to make my headquarters here at Whatcom, but I can't stand the hotels in your new towns. It's the most amazing thing!" he went on, smiling at her as she stood twisting the card in her fingers, not knowing exactly what to do with it. "You go to sleep at night in a Puget Sound village with the fronts of the stores painted green, blue and red, spasmodic patches of sidewalk here and there, dust ankle deep, and no street-lights—and you wake in the morning in a *city*! A city with fine stone blocks and residences, stone pavements, electric lights, and railways, gas, splendid water-works"—he was checking off now, excitedly, on his fingers—"sewerage, big mills, factories, canneries, public schools that would make the East stare, churches, libraries"—he stopped abruptly, and, dropping his arms simply to his sides, added—"and not a hotel! Not a comfortable bed or a good meal to be had for love or money!"

"Yes, that's so," said Lavinia, reluctantly. "But you can't expect us to get everythin' all at onct. Why, Whatcom's boom only started in about six months ago."

Mr. C. Daun Diller looked amused. "Oh, if it were this town only," he said, sitting down on one of the hair-cloth chairs and feeling himself slide gently forward, "I shouldn't have mentioned it. But the truth is, there are only three decent hotels in the whole Puget Sound country. But I know"—here he smiled at her again—"that it's not safe to breathe a word against Puget Sound to a Puget-Sounder."

"No, it ain't," said the girl, responding to the smile and the respectfully bantering tone. Then she moved to the door. "Well, I'll see what maw says to it," she said, and vanished.

Mr. C. Daun Diller stood up and pushed his hands down into his pockets, whistling softly. He walked over to the organ and looked at the music. There were three large books: "The Home Circle," "The Golden Chord," and "The Family Treasury"; a "simplified" copy of "The Maiden's Prayer," and a book of "Gospel Songs."

The young man smiled.

"All the same," he said, as if in answer to a disparaging remark made by some one else, "she's about the handsomest girl I ever saw. I'm getting right-down anxious to see myself what 'maw' will 'say to it.'

After a long while Mrs. Vaiden appeared in a crisply-starched ginghams dress and a company manner—both of which had been freshly put on for the occasion. Mr. Diller found her rather painfully polite, and he began to wonder, after paying his first week's board, whether he could endure two or three months of her; but he was quite, quite sure that he could endure a full year of the daughter.

A couple of evenings later he was sitting by the window in his quaint but exquisitely neat room, writing, when a light rap came upon his door. Upon opening it he found Lavinia standing, bashfully, a few steps away. There was a picture-like, broad-brimmed hat set coquettishly on her splendid hair.

"Maw wanted I shu'd ask you if you'd like to see an Indian canoe-race," she said.

"Would I?" he ejaculated, getting into a great excitement at once. "Well, I should say so! Awfully good of your mother to think—but where is it—when is it? How can I see it?"

"It's down by the viaduct—right now," said Lavinia. Then she added, shyly, pretending to be deeply engrossed with her glove: "I'm just goin'."

"Oh, are you?" said Diller, seizing his hat and stick and coming eagerly out to her. "And may I go with you? Will you take me in hand? I haven't the ghost of an idea where the viaduct is."

"Oh, yes, I'll show you," she said with a glad little laugh, and they went swiftly down the stairs and out into the sweet evening.

"You know," she said, as he opened the gate for her with a deference to which she was not accustomed, and which gave her a thrill of innocent exultation, "the Alaska Indians are just comin' back from hop-pickin' down around Puyallup an' Yakima an' Seattle, an' they alway's stop here an' have races with the Lummies an' the Nooksacks."

Mr. Diller drew a deep breath.

"Do you know," he said, "I wouldn't have missed this for anything—not for anything I can think of. And yet I should if it hadn't been for"—he hesitated, and then added—"your mother." They looked into each other's eyes and laughed, very foolishly and happily.

The sun was setting—moving slowly, scarlet and of dazzling brilliancy, down the western sky, that shaded rapidly from pale blue to salmon, and from salmon to palest pea-green. Beneath, superbly motionless, at full tide, the sound stretched mile on mile away to Lummi peninsula, against whose hills the sun rested—every fir-tree on those noble crests standing out against that burnished background. A broad, unbroken path of gold stretched from shore to shore. Some sea-gulls were circling in endless, silvery rings through the amethystine haze between sea and sky. The old, rotten pier running a mile out to sea shone like a strip of gold above the deep blue water. It was crowded with people, indifferent to danger in their eagerness to see the races. Indeed, there seemed to be people everywhere; on the high banks, the piers, and the mills scattered over the tide-flats, and out in row-boats. Two brass bands

were playing stirring strains alternately. There was much excitement—much shouting, hurrying, running. The crowd kept swaying from the viaduct over to the pier, and from the pier back to the viaduct. Nobody seemed to be quite sure where the start would be; even the three judges, when asked, yelled back, as they clambered down to their row-boat: "We don't know. Wait and see!"

"What accommodating persons," said Mr. Diller, cheerfully. "Shall we go over to the pier? The tide seems to be running that way."

"Oh, the tide's not running now," said Lavinia. "It's full."

Diller looked amused. "I meant the people," he said.

The girl laughed and looked around on the pushing crowd. "I guess we'd best stop right here on the viaduct; here's just where they started last year an' the year before. Oh, see, here's the Alaskans camped pretty near under us!"

As she lifted her voice a little Diller saw a young man standing near start and turn toward her with a glad look of recognition; but at once his glance rested on Diller, and his expression changed to a kind of puzzled bewilderment. The girl was leaning over the railing and did not see him, but he never took his eyes away from her and Diller.

There was a long wait, but the crowd did not lose its patience or its good humor. There was considerable betting going on, and there was the same exciting uncertainty about the start. The sun went down and a bank of apricot-colored clouds piled low over the snow crest of Mount Baker in the east. The pier darkened and the path of gold faded, but splashes of scarlet still lingered on the blue water. A chill, sweet wind started up suddenly, and some of the girl's bronze curls got loose about her white temples. Diller put her wrap around her carefully, and she smiled up at him deliciously. Then she cried out: "Oh, they're gettin' into the boat! They're goin' to start. Oh, I'm so glad!" and struck her two hands together gleefully, like a child.

The long, narrow, richly-painted and carven canoe slid down gracefully into the water. Eleven tall, supple Alaskan Indians, bare to the waist, leaped lightly to their places. They sat erect, close to the sides of the boat, holding their short paddles perpendicularly. At a signal the paddles shot straight down into the water, and, with a swift, magnificent straining and swelling of muscles in the powerful bronze arms and bodies, were pushed backward and withdrawn in lightning strokes. The canoe flashed under the viaduct and appeared on the other side, and a great shout belched from thousands of throats. From camping-places farther up the shore the other boats darted out into the water and headed for the viaduct.

"Oh, good! good!" cried Lavinia in a very ecstasy of excitement. "They're goin' to start right under us. We're just in the place!"

"Twenty dollars on the Nooksacks!" yelled a bear-eyed man in a carriage. "Twenty! Twenty ag'in ten on the Nooksacks!"

The band burst into "Hail, Columbia!" with beautiful irrelevancy. The crowd came surging back from the pier. Diller was excited, too. His face was flushed and he was breathing heavily. "Wh'll you bet on?" he asked, laughing, and thinking, even at that moment, how ravishingly lovely she was with that glow on her face and the loose curls blowing about her face and throat.

"Oh, the Alaskas!" cried the girl, striking little blows of impatience on the railing with her soft fists. "They're so tall an' fine-lookin'! They're so strong an' grand! Look at their muscles—just like ropes! Oh, I'll bet on the Alaskas! I love tall men!"

"Do you?" said Diller. "I'm tall."

They looked into each other's eyes again and laughed. Then a voice spoke over their shoulders—a kind, patient voice. "Oh, Lavin," it said; "I wouldn't bet if I was you."

Lavinia gave a little scream. Both turned instantly. The young man who had been watching them stood close to them. He wore working-clothes—a flannel shirt and cheap, faded trousers and coat. He had a good, strong honest face, and there was a tenderness in the look he bent on the girl that struck Diller as being almost pathetic.

The glow in Lavinia's face turned to the scarlet of the sunset.

"Oh!" she said, embarrassed; "that you, Bart? I didn't know you was back."

"I just got back," he replied, briefly. "I got to go back again 'n the mornin'. I was just on my way up to your house. I guess I'll go on. I'm tired, an' I've seen lots o' c'noe races." He looked at her wistfully.

"Well," she said, after a moment's hesitation. "You go on up, then. Maw an' paw's at home, an' I'll come's soon's the race's over."

"All right," he said, with a little drop in his voice, and walked away.

"Oh, dear!" cried Lavinia, "we're missin' the start, ain't we?"

The canoes were lying side by side, waiting for the signal. Every Indian was bent forward, holding his paddle suspended above the water in both hands. There was what might be termed a rigid suppleness in the attitude. The dark outlines of the paddles showed clearly in the water, which had turned yellow as brass. Suddenly the band ceased playing and the signal rang across the sunset. Thirty-three paddles shot into the water, working with the swift regularity of piston-rods in powerful engines. The crowds cheered and yelled. The canoes did not flash or glide now, but literally plowed and plunged through the water, which boiled and seethed behind them in white, bubbled foam that at times hid the bronze figures from sight completely. There was no shouting now, but tense, breathless excitement. People clung, motionless, in dangerous places and stared with straining eyes, under bent brows, after the leaping canoes. The betting had been high. The fierce, rhythmic strokes of the paddles made a noise that was like the rapid pumping of a great ram. To Diller, who stood, pale, with compressed lips, it sounded like the frantic heart-beat of a nation in passionate riot. Mingled with it was a noise that, once heard, cannot be forgotten—a weird, guttural chanting on one tone, that yet seemed to hold a windy, musical note; a

sound, regular and rhythmic as the paddle-strokes, that came from deep in the breasts of the rigidly swaying Indians and found utterance through locked teeth.

A mile out a railroad crossed the tide-lands, and this was the turning point. The Nooksacks made it first, closely followed by the Alaskans, and then, amid wild cheering, the three canoes headed for the viaduct. Faster and faster worked those powerful arms; the paddles whizzed more fiercely through the air; the water spurted in white sheets behind; the canoes bounded, length on length, out of the water; and louder and faster the guttural chant beat time. The Alaskans and the Nooksacks were coming in together, carven prow to carven prow, and the excitement was terrific. Nearer and nearer, neither gaining, they came. Then, suddenly, there burst a mad yell of triumph, and the Alaskan boat arose from the water and leaped almost its full length ahead of the Nooksacks; and amidst waving hats and handkerchiefs, and almost frantic cheering—the race was won.

"By the eternal!" said Diller, beginning to breathe again and wiping the perspiration from his brow; "if that isn't worth crossing the plains to see, I don't know what is!" But his companion did not hear. She was alternately waving her kerchief to the victors and pounding her small fists on the railings in an ecstasy of triumph.

* * * * *

"Lavin-ee!"

"Well?"

"You come right down hyer an' help me em'ty this renchin'-water. I'd like to know what's got into you! A-stayin' up-stairs half your time, an' just a-mopin' around when you are down. You ain't b'en worth your salt lately!"

The girl came into the kitchen slowly. "What you jawin' about now, maw?" she said, smiling.

"I'll show you what I'm a-jawin' about, 's you call it. Take holt o' this tub an' help me em'ty this renchin'-water."

"Well, don't holler so; Mr. Diller'll hear you."

"I don't care if he *does* hear me. I can give him his come-upans if he goes to foolin' around, listenin'. I don't care if he does write for a paper 'n New York! You've got to take holt o' the work more'n you've b'en lately. A-trainin' around all over the country with him, a-showin' him things to write about an' make fun of! I shu'd think Bart Winn had just about got enough of it."

"I wish you'd keep still about Bart Winn," said Lavinia, impatiently.

"Well, I ain't a-goin' to keep still about him." Mrs. Vaiden poured the dish-water into the sink and passed the dish-cloth round and round the pan, inside and outside, with mechanical care, before she opened the back door and hung it out on the side of the house. "I guess I don't ha' to ask you when I want to talk. There you was—gone all day yester'day a-huntin' star-fish, an' that renchin'-water a-settin' there a-ruinin' that tub because I couldn't em'ty it all by myself. Just 's if he never saw star-fish where he come from. An' then to-day—b'en gone all the mornin' a-ketchin' crabs! How many crabs'd you ketch, I'd like to know!"

"We didn't ketch many," said Lavinia, with a soft, aggravating laugh. "The water wa'n't clear enough to see 'em."

"No, I guess the water wa'n't clear enough to see 'em!" The rinsing-water had been emptied, and Mrs. Vaiden was industriously wiping the tub. "I've got all the star-fishin' an' the crab-ketchin' I want, an' I'm a-goin' to tell that young man that he can go some'ers else for his board. He's b'en here a month, an' he's just about made a fool o' you. Pret' soon you'll be a-thinkin' you're too good for Bart Winn!"

"Oh, no," said Bart Winn's honest voice in the doorway; "I guess Lavin won't never be a-thinkin' that."

"Mercy!" cried Mrs. Vaiden, starting and coloring guiltily; "that you! How scairt me! I'm all of a-trimble."

Bart advanced to Lavinia and kissed her with much tenderness; but instead of blushing, she paled.

"When'd you come?" she asked, briefly, drawing away, while her mother, muttering something about the sour cream and the spring-house, went out discreetly.

"This mornin'," said Bart. "I'm a-goin' to stay home now."

The girl sat down, taking a pan of potatoes on her lap. "I wonder where the case-knife is," she said, helplessly.

"I'll get it," said Bart, running into the pantry and returning with the knife. "I love to wait on you, Lavin," he added, with shining eyes. "I guess I'll get to wait on you a sight, now. I see your paw's I come up an' he said's how I could board hyer. I'll do the shores for you—an' glad to. An', oh, Lavin! I most forgot. I spoke for a buggy's I come up, so's I can take you a-ridin' to-night."

"I guess I can't go," said Lavinia, holding her head down and paring potatoes as if her life depended upon getting the skins off.

"You can't? Why can't you?"

"I—why, I'm goin' a salmon-spearin' up at Squalicum Creek, I guess. Salmon's a-runnin' like everythin' now. 'Most half the town goes up there soon's it gets dark."

"That a fact?" said Bart, shifting from one foot to the other and looking interested. "I want to know. Well"—his face brightened—"I'll go down an' tell 'em I'll take the rig to morro' night, an' I'll go a-spearin' with you. Right down 'n front o' Eldridge's?"

"Yes." A pulse began thumping violently in the girl's throat. Her eyelids got so heavy she could not lift them. "I guess—that is, I—why you sce, Bart, I got comp'ny."

"Well, I guess the girls won't object to my goin' along o' you."

"It ain't girls," said Lavinia, desperately. "It's—a—it's Mr. Diller; the gentleman that boards here."

"Oh," said Bart, slowly. Then there was a most trying silence, during which the ticking of the clock and the beating of her own heart were the only sounds Lavinia heard. At last she said, feebly: "You see he writes for a New York newspaper—one o' the big ones. He's a-writin' up the whole Puget Sound country. An' he don't know just what he'd ort to see, nor just how to see it, unless somebody shows him about—an' I've b'en a-showin' him."

"Oh!" said Bart again, but quite in another tone, quite



THE BACHELOR'S CHRISTMAS REVERIE.—DRAWN BY L. W. HITCHCOCK.

CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF LESLIE'S WEEKLY.

words, at least, seemed to have written themselves on his brain. He groped about blindly for his hat, and went out into the shrill, whistling night. The last torch had burnt itself out, and everything was black save the electric lights, winking in the wind, and one strip of whitening sky above Mount Baker, where presently the moon would rise, silver and cool.

* * * * *

It was seven o'clock in the morning when he came back. He washed his hands and face at the sink on the porch, and combed his hair before the tiny mirror, in which a dozen reflections of himself danced. Mrs. Vaiden was frying ham. At sight of him she began to cry, weakly and noiselessly. "Where you been?" she sniffed. "You look forty year old. I set up till one o'clock, a-waitin' for you."

"Mrs. Vaiden," said Bart, quietly, "I'm in great trouble. I've walked all night, tryin' to make up my mind to it. I've done it at last; but I cu'dn't 'a' come back tell I did. I'm sorry you waited up."

"Oh, I don't mind that's long's you're gettin' reconciled to it, Bart." Mrs. Vaiden spoke more hopefully. "You set right down an' have a bite to eat."

"I don't want anythin'," he replied; but he sat down and took a cup of coffee. It must have been very hot, for suddenly great tears came into his eyes and stood there. Mrs. Vaiden sat down opposite to him and leaned her elbow on the table and her head on her hand. "Bart," she said, solemnly, "I don't want you shu'd think I ever winked at this. It never entered my head. My heart's just broke. To see a likely girl, that cu'd 'a' had her pick anywhere, up an' run away with a no-account newspaper fello"—when she cu'd 'a' had you!" The man's face contracted. "Whatever on earth the neighbors 'll say I don't know."

"Who cares what neighbors say?"

"Oh, that's all very well for you to say; you ain't her mother."

"No," said Bart, with a look that made her quail; "I ain't. I wish to God I was! Mebbe 't wouldn't hurt so!"

"Well, it ad ort to hurt more!" retorted the lady, with spirit. "Just's if you felt any worse 'n I do!" He laid his head on his hand and groaned. "Oh, I know it's gone deep, Bart"—her tone softened—"but I say, you ain't her mother. You'll get over it an' marry again—like Laviny wanted that you shu'd. It was good o' her to think o' that. I will say that much for her."

"Yes," said Bart; "it was good of her." Then there came a little silence, broken finally by Mrs. Vaiden. Her voice held a note of peevish regret. "There's that fine house o' your'n 'most finished—two story an' a ell! An' that liberry across the front hall from the parlor! When I think how vain Laviny was o' that liberry! What'll you do with the house now, Bart?"

"Sell it!" he answered, between his teeth.

"An' there's all that fine furnitur' that Laviny an' you picked out. She fairly danced when she told me about it. All covered with satin—robin-egg green, wa'n't it?"

"Blue." The word dropped mechanically from his white lips.

"Well, blue, then. What'll you do with it?"

"I guess they'll take it back by my losin' my first payment," he answered, with a kind of ghastly humor.

"Well, there's your new buggy—all paid for. They won't take that back."

"I'll give that to you," he said, with a bitter smile.

"Oh, you!" exclaimed Mrs. Vaiden, throwing out her large hand at him in a gesture of mingled embarrassment and delight. "As if I'd take it, after Laviny's actin' up this a-way!"

He did not reply, and presently she broke out, angrily, with:

"The huzzy! The ungrateful, deceitful jade! To treat a body so. How do we know whether he's got anythin' to keep a wife on? I'll admit, though, he was alwus genteel-dressed. I do think, Bart, you might 'a' took pattern 'n that. 'T wu'n't like 's if you wa'n't able to wear good clo'es—an' Laviny liked such things."

"I wish you'd 'a' told me a good spell ago what she liked, Mrs. Vaiden."

"Well, that's so. There ain't much use 'n lockin' the stable door after the horse's gone. Oh, that makes me think about your offerin' me that buggy—if I wu'd."

"I guess you'll have to. I'm goin' to leave on the train, an' I'll order it sent to you."

"Oh, you! Why, where you goin', Bart?"

"I'm goin' to follow him!" he thundered, bringing his fist down on the table in a way that made every dish leap out of its place. "I ain't goin' to hurt him—unless talk hurts—but I'm goin' to say some things to him. I ain't had a thought for three year that that girl ain't ben in! I ain't made a plan that she ain't ben in. I've laid awake night after night just too happy to sleep. An' now to have a—a thing like him take her from me 'n one month. But that ain't the worst!" he burst out, passionately. "We don't know how he'll treat her, an' she'll be too proud to complain!"

"I can't see why you care how he treats her," said Mrs. Vaiden, "after the way she's treated you."

"No," he answered, with a look that ought to have crushed her, "I didn't s'pose you cu'd see. I didn't expect you to see that, or anythin' else but your own feelin'—the way the thing affex you. But that's what I'm goin' to follow him for, Mrs. Vaiden. An' when I find him—I'm goin' to tell him"—there was an awful calm in his tone now—"that if he ever misuses her, now that he's married her, I'll kill him. I'll shoot him down like a dawg!"

"My Lord!" broke in Mrs. Vaiden, with a new thought. "What if he ain't married her! She never said so 'n her letter. Oh, Bart!" beginning to weep hysterically, "mebbe you cu'd get her back."

He leaped to his feet, panting like an animal; his great breast swelled in and out swiftly, his hands clinched, his eyes burning at her.

"What!" he said. "Do you dare? Her mother! Oh, you—you—God! but I wish you was a man!"

The whistle of a coming train broke across the morning stillness. He turned, seized his hat and crushed it on his head. Then he came back and took up the chair in which he had been sitting.

"Mrs. Vaiden," he said, quietly, "d' you see this chair? Well, 'f he ain't married her—"

With two or three movements of his powerful wrists he wrenches the chair into as many pieces and dropped them on the floor.

* * * * *

After a while Mrs. Vaiden emerged from the stupefaction into which his last words had thrown her, and resumed her breakfast.

"Well," she said, stirring her coffee until it swam round and round in a smooth eddy in the cup, "if I ever see his beat! Whoever 'd 'a' thought he'd take his cuttin' out that a-way? I never 'd 'a' thought it. Worryin' about her, after the way she's up an' used him! A body 'd think he'd be glad 'f she was treated shameful, and hatto lead a mis'able life a-realizin' what she'd threw away. But not him. Well, they say still water runs deep. Mebbe it's ungrateful to think 't after his givin' me that fine buggy. How Mis' Bentley will stare when I drive roun' to see her!" she interjected, with a smile of anticipation; "but after seein' how he showed up his temper just now I ain't sure but Laviny's head was level when she took the other 'n. 'F only he had a donation claim!"

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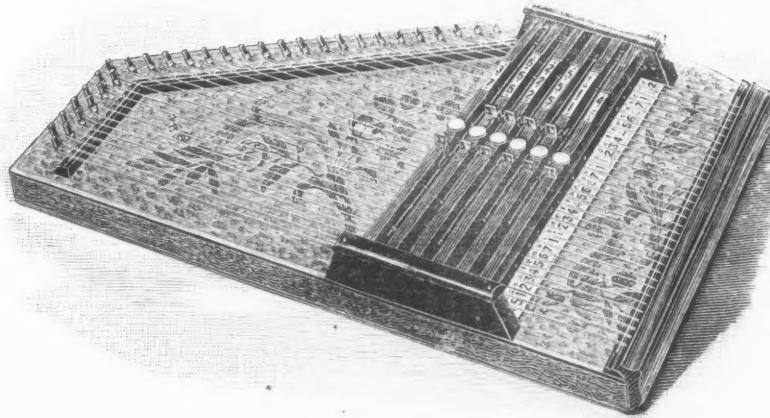
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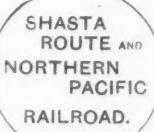
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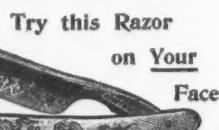
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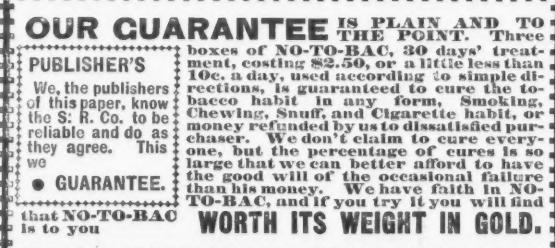
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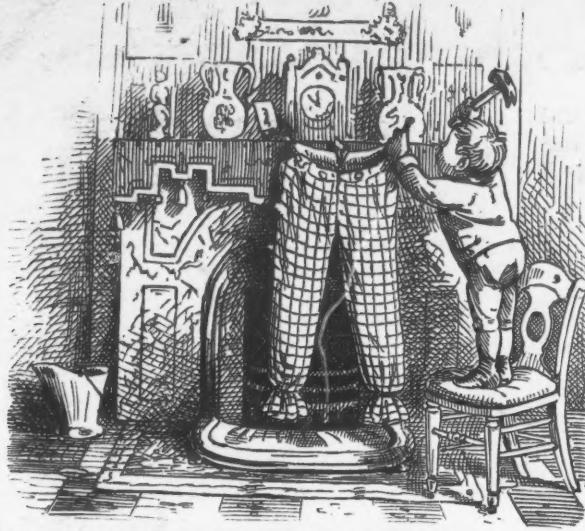
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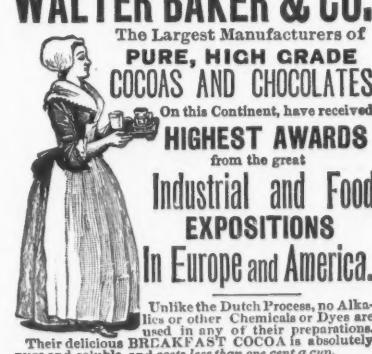
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